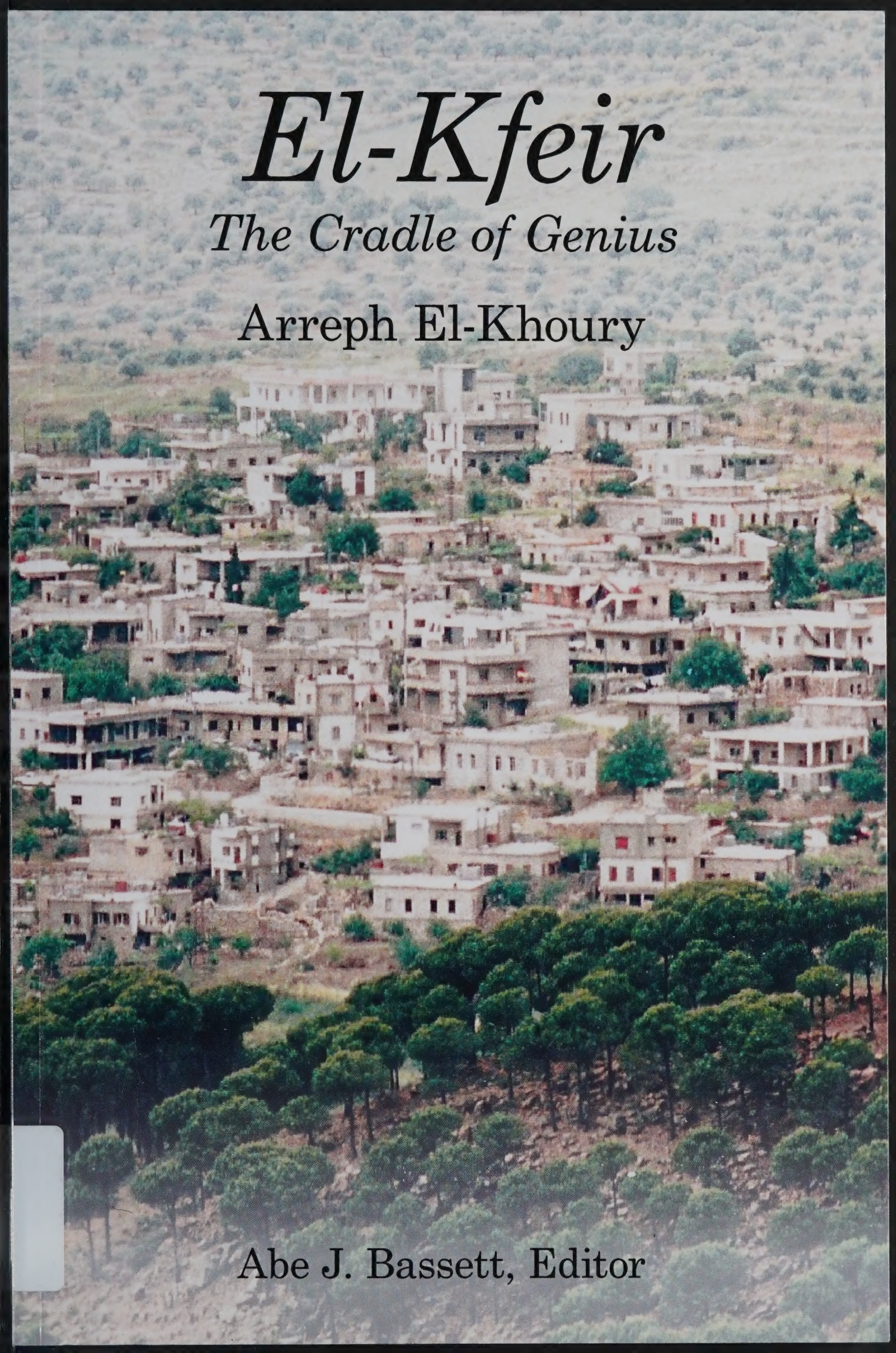
El-Kfeir

The Cradle of Genius

Arreph El-Khoury



Abe J. Bassett, Editor

El-Kfeir
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The Biggest Small Village in Lebanon

By Arreph El-Khoury

Edited by Abe J. Bassett

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Remembrances of Rahija Saad Bassett
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Abe, Son of Abraham
Stories, Vignettes, Remembrances, Reflections, Thoughts & Tributes
February 2014

Producer's Notes
A Personal History of The Department of Theatre Arts
Wright State University, 1970 – 1988
August 2015

FOREWORD

By Abe J. Bassett

Arreph El-Khoury, (1905 – 1992) is a remarkable man who set out to write in English a history of his village—Kfeir el Zeit, the Village of Oil. He was equipped to do so having spent 15 years in the United States from age 17 to 32. He was aware that, if successful, it may be the first book regarding an author's Lebanese village of birth to have been written in English.

One of his purposes in coming to America at the young age of 17 was not only for the adventure, but to learn and perfect English as a step toward his goal of becoming more worldly and sophisticated and perhaps to hone his writing skills. His older sister Najla El-Khoury had married Elias Abass Bassett in 1920 in Kfeir, and later that year they were living in Welch, West Virginia, a small but prosperous town, a short ride on the N&W railroad south of Williamson and north of Bluefield. Arreph clerked in Eli's confectionary store, improving his English and learning American idioms. He entered Welch High School graduating in 1926, all the while continuing to clerk in the confectionary store and becoming more acclimated to America.

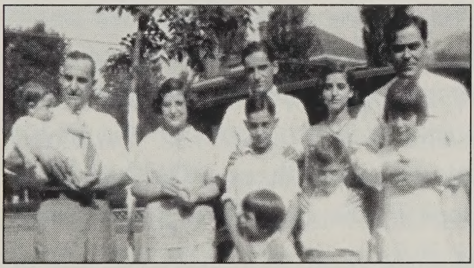


Figure 1 Summer, 1931 [2]

The photograph on this page was taken in the summer of 1931 at the home of Abe and Rahija Bassett in Williamson, showing Arreph as a handsome young man of 26.[1] Arreph returned to Williamson many times, always staying at the Abraham Bassett home. He traveled the West Virginia circuit, (as well as Ohio and Michigan), meeting Kfeirian families and leaders, and was involved in discussions of the birth of the Kfeirian Reunion or the Maharajan, as it then called.

[1] Arreph became a naturalized citizen in 1932.

[2] Arreph is standing in the center of the back row, Elias Bassett, his brother-in-law is at the right, and Abraham Bassett is at the left holding Abraham Jr., the editor of this book, not quite one year old.

While there were reunion leaders in every city, Arreph gave great credit to my father, Abraham Bassett, who, as the parent of five daughters, was interested in a way for young girls to meet potential husbands. One of the highlights of the early reunions was the introduction of the young ladies as debutantes.

After the first reunion, Arreph and Moses Bassett of Napoleon, Ohio, introduced a motion that for future reunions, each family must pay their own expenses. It wasn't fair they thought that the host city should bear all the expenses of a three-day meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

While in America, Arreph often signed his name as Aref Khoury, but for official business and for publication he was Arreph El-Khoury. In Welch, he became close friends with, Kermit Hunter, who became the prime playwright of historical outdoor dramas, starting with *Unto These Hills, A Drama of The Cherokee Indian*, performed continuously since 1950 in Cherokee, North Carolina.[3]

After high school graduation in 1926, Arreph and Hunter began writing and submitting stories without success until 1932 when one of Arreph's stories, *Hillbred*, was selected for publication. More success came with the re-publication of *Hillbred* in 1936 in *A World of Great Stories*. Here, Arreph shared the limelight with renown authors as O. Henry, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, John Steinbeck, James Joyce, Somerset Maugham, Rudyard Kipling, and many more authors of note.

That was such a prestigious event, that he began having greater success, writing fictionalized stories and on hunting, one of his passions. The editor has been able to locate three published titles and has presented them in the Book IV, Stories. They are *Hillbred, The Snare* and *The Woman of the Hills.*

Having spent 15 years in the United States, he returned to Lebanon in 1936 with the intention of returning in six months. But he began a career as a reporter, writer, and translator of books in Arabic from English. The idea of a book about Kfeir written in English came to him after the Director of the US Information Office hired him to translate two books from English into Arabic.

Knowing that a book on Kfeir would not be a project for profit,

[3] Hunter authored 42 historical outdoor dramas

he worked on it in fits and starts over the years, but finally by about 1972, he had a draft. He was in communication with the Kfeirian Reunion Foundation in 1973 and began circulating the draft. In 1977 William Ringle of the Gannet New Service came to his house in Kfeir to gather information on the state of the village. This was a tense and dangerous period because of the Palestinian-Israeli wars and the nascent Lebanese Civil War. When Ringle began asking questions about the history of Kfeir, Arreph showed him his draft of the village.[4] The reaction was so positive that Arreph was motivated to complete the work. Having maintained contact with Kfeirians in the United States, he began discussing the possibility of the Kfeirian Reunion producing the book. He sent another draft as early as 1978.

The feedback from the Reunion was at first encouraging, and the book was targeted for publication and distribution at the 50th reunion in 1982, but then Arreph's work came under criticism. The reading committee of two, felt he had spent too much effort on his family and not enough on others in the village. While the criticism burned, he took it to heart and set about interviewing the village elders, boosting historical information as seen in Book III, The Kfeirians. His compilation of family history was ongoing as late as 1987, five years before he passed away.

In the fall of 1991, I wrote to Arreph asking for an article to be included in the KRF Newsletter which I had been editing. He responded with an appropriate article, "The Hijra—A Personal Memoire." The Hijra tells of the migration of the people of Kfeir [and other villages of Lebanon] to the United States, Canada and Brazil, along with other countries. Reading through the chapters on The Kfeirians will make the reader aware of the large number of Kfeirian families that departed from the village to settle overseas. The on-going exodus, particularly from 1895 to 1913 and after 1920 was changing the character of the village.

In the fall of 1991, Arreph gave me permission to edit and publish *Kfeir, the Cradle of Genius.* I regret the slippage of time,

[4] The Kfeirians of Huntington concerned about the safety of the village during the raging war in Lebanon, prevailed on the Huntington Herald Dispatch to persuade the Gannet New Service to send their Middle East correspondent to Kfeir to investigate and to write a report.

but in the meantime, I founded and operated a touring company, published two books, and was on the doorstep of publishing Mary Tweel Haddad's *Al-Kfeir in America* when Dr. Joseph Touma had it printed. I do believe that Arreph's *Kfeir, The Cradle of Genius* and Mary's *Al-Kfeir in America* are a splendid pair of books for the reader who seeks an insight into the village of our heritage.

As a reader of Arreph's writing what I have learned?

- The village has always lived under a steady state of change, as families and industries come and go. As an example, at one time the village was a powerhouse of weaving, with a loom in every home. The production of silk was once an important cottage industry. Mulberry trees were planted so the leaves could be collected to feed the worms which were harvested for their silk thread.[5]
- As industries come and go, so do families. Arreph writes how some families came to Kfeir 900 or more years ago, but now emigration has seen the dwindling of the Christian population.[6]
- In spite of humble education facilities, the children of Kfeir were reasonably well-educated.[7] Many of her citizens have achieved renown in their fields of endeavor, as you will discover. Kfeirians have become Prime Ministers, United Nation President, US Senator and Congressman, authors, professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers, industrialists, teachers and, yes, peddlers who used what they knew of hard work and perseverance to build successful businesses in foreign countries. Besides immigration to the United States, many Kfeirians immigrated to Canada, Australia and countries in Africa. Brazil was a major destination for Kfeirians.

[5] As a girl, my mother Rahija was tasked with feeding the silk worms growing in her house. Silk is a natural protein fiber, which can be woven into textiles, and is produced by certain insect larvae to form cocoons. The best-known silk is obtained from the cocoons of the larvae of the mulberry silkworm reared in captivity.
[6] In *The Birds of September*, Emily Nasrallah writes movingly of the painful exodus from Kfeir to Prince Edward Island.
[7] As a motherless child, Rahija was withdrawn from school during her third year, and yet became proficient in reading and writing Arabic. As bookkeeper for her father Assef's butchering business, she kept accounts which led to her becoming a lifelong journal writer.

As editor I have attempted to respect the style of the author and to make as few changes as possible, striving only to make sure the text is readable. One problem is virtually unsolvable, and that occurs when an Arabic name or word is rendered into English. Arreph writes that he consulted maps and documents of four different periods and found there no consistency in the rendering of name Kfeir. Kfeir, which means village, occurs in the following forms: Kfar, Kafr, Kfair, Kufayr or Kfeir. I have also tried to avoid changing the spelling of family names, choosing to accept Arreph's English version. Commas, and other punctuation, have been subtracted and added, only to make sure the author's meaning was clear.

I thank my wife, Sharon Kinnaird Bassett, who gave invaluable editorial advice in addition to unending encouragement and support. And also, my deepest thanks to my former student, colleague, and lifelong friend, Professor James T. Volz for his careful reading of the entire book and his many suggestions for achieving clarity, consistency and conciseness.

The reader should bear in mind that the bulk of Arreph's writing probably took place between 1960 and 1980, a tumultuous time in Lebanon's history marked by the Israeli-Palestinian [PLO] conflict, the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon from 1978 to 2000, and the Lebanese Civil War from 1975 to 1990.

In Book IV, Stories, I have presented items that did not appear in Arreph's drafts, but are nonetheless important because they relate to the village and to Arreph. They include two relevant articles co-written by Arreph and Bruce Conde, a friend and colleague, and three of Arreph's US published works of fiction: *Hillbred*, *A Woman of the Hills*, and *The Snare.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arreph El-Khoury, the son of Ayoub El-Khoury and Hannah Mikhail, was born in the village of Kfeir, November 13, 1905. His first education was in the village at the Protestant Mission school, where the teacher was a young lady from the town of Majdal Shams in Syria, who taught Arabic to the handful of Protestant students of boys and girls and some English to the older students. During World War I, this school was closed by the Ottoman Turks, as was the Russian Mission school, sponsored by the Russian Tzarist Government.

The people of the village continued the education of their children by hiring houses, who with their teachers kept on moving from one house to another during the four years of war, after which Arreph went to Damascus to pursue his studies. Here he lived at his Uncle Faris' house and attended the Protestant School there for one year only, after which he went to Gerard Institute for another, after which he went for another at Marj-Ayoun High School for another year also.

In 1922 he migrated to the United States where he worked for in his brother-in-law's confectionary store, before entering Welch, West Virginia, High School from which he graduated in 1926. He went back to work and soon developed the desire for writing. He and a young friend, Kermit Hunter collaborated on article writing, none of which was accepted. Later, Kermit turned to drama writing and became one of the most famous of America's playwrights. Arreph, on his turn, turned to short story writing and for two years he wrote and sent out stories, but none were accepted. Finally, the editor of the "Syrian World" Magazine of New York City accepted two of his stories and the gates of the temple were now opened and he began to have stories published in such magazines as "Oriental Stories," "Magic Carpet," "Asia," "Syrian Ark," and many others. He also wrote many articles about the outdoors and hunting that were published in leading American magazines.

Returning to Lebanon for a short visit in 1936, he was caught there during the buildup to World War II, and when the USA

entered that war, he registered for military service but was never called to service.

In 1941, he began work as a cashier and secretary to a Lebanese and Palestinian company in Damascus organized following the British Army's entry into Syria. This work lasted two years, after which he returned to his village of Kfeir for a short while, and then to Beirut to work at Lebanese English language dailies and weeklies. Finally, he was employed for two years with the Save the Children Federation.

During these years he kept writing short stories and articles, with the "Middle East Forum," (a publication of the Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut) publishing a good number of his articles and stories. The articles were chiefly about hunting and the outdoors. One of these articles about falconry, was published three times in the USA and Lebanon. He also wrote articles in Arabic about prominent Arab persons living abroad.

From 1960 to 1970, he was the Middle East correspondent to the leading West German economic daily, "The Handelsplatt," of Dusseldorf. He was once chosen to represent Syria in a regional nature conservation symposium held at the UNESCO palace in Beirut, and his speech there was published in their minutes.

Many of his published short stories were translated into Arabic and appeared in various magazines and newspapers, others were broadcast from radio stations in Damascus, Beirut on the BBC and Voice of America. He has twice appeared on the NBC television network, once for ten minutes, the other for fifteen. NBC brought a television production team to Kfeir for the interview. He was frequently interviewed by American and Arab correspondents on various Middle Eastern subjects.

Several years ago, one of his short stories, *Hillbred*—first published in "Asia" Magazine of New York City—was chosen among the world's best one hundred short stories of the 20th century, appearing in an anthology published by the Crown Publishing Co. under the title, "A World of Great Stories."

Arreph was a member of the Masonic Lodge (A.F. & A.M.) and the Royal Arch Mason's Lodge. He is also an honorary member of the American Quill and Scroll journalistic organization, and

a member of the American National Rifle Association. In Syria, he was a member of the board of directors of the Syrian Hunters Association for several years.

Arreph was married to Samia Toubia from the town of Deir Mimas in the District of Marj-Ayoun in Southern Lebanon. In later life he attended to his land, living the easy life of a country gentleman. He passed away in Kfeir on February 11, 1992.

DEDICATION

This Book
is dedicated to the memory of
Faris El-Khoury, the struggling young
Kfeirian boy who rose up to be the president
of the United Nations Security Council.
And his four brothers,
Ayoub, the Country Gentleman,
Khalil, the Judge of Judges,
Daoud, the Philosopher, and
Faiz, the ablest jurist in the Arab World.

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MOUNT HERMON



Figure 2 Mt. Hermon. Wikipedia

The Transfiguration

After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, the brother of James and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

St. Matthew, XVII, 1-8

We know that Jesus was at Caesarea Philippi, near the town of Banias, which is situated at the foot of Mount Hermon. To the east, south and west, there are plains, but from the town of Banias north is Mount Hermon and this high mountain, on which Jesus had his transfiguration, is our Mount Hermon.

The length of the Hermon range, from Banias to the Beirut-Damascus Road near Mazar Mountain, is some 60 kilometers. It widens here and there according to the lay of the land and sometimes disappears completely to reappear like a symphonic string played by a flute to lead the orchestra, and in this sense, Mt. Hermon is a symphony.



Figure 3 Peak of Mt. Hermon, Wikipedia.com

The Mountain has three summits; the highest is 9184 ft. high; the second is 8248 ft. and the third is 7336 ft. They are honoraria called the *Castle of Antar, Castle of Shibit* and the *Cave of Abou Ma'ikil.* The crest of Mount Hermon defines the boundary between Lebanon and Syria and forms the eastern wall of the Southern Bekaa in the region of Rashaya-Kfeir-Hasbaya.

Called Jabel Sheikh in Arabic—the Mountain of the Old Man—because of its white crest in the winter, this imposing natural monument has been venerated as a sacred mountain by the ancient inhabitants of the land. The Assyrians called it *Saniron.* It was the *Siron* of the Phoenicians and the *Baal-Hermon* of the Old Testament.

St. Jerome, writing in early Christian times, says the pagans still worshiped at the top of Baal-Hermon at the celebrated temples found there. Today the crater of the second of Hermon's three summits, The Castle of Antar, still shows vestige of a small Roman-period temple.[8] However, what is more interesting is the great

[8] There is a sacred building made of hewn blocks of stone on the summit of Mount Hermon. Known as Qasr Antar, it is the highest temple of the ancient world and was documented by Sir Charles Warren in 1869. An inscription on a limestone stele recovered by Warren from Qasr Antar was translated by George Nickelsburg to read "According to the command of the greatest and Holy God, those who take an oath (proceed) from here."

circular wall of well-dressed masonry—two courses still visible—which encircles an 18-foot cone of the summit proper. This typical feature of all early Semitic places of worship of great importance probably marked the limit of circumambulation of the sacred cone, a rite still practiced at the Qaaba in Mecca.

The cone itself has a funnel-like rock 15 feet in diameter, which no doubt served as the base into which water from seas, lakes, rivers and wells was poured ceremonially in the ancient *yerid* rite whereby the gods of the mountains were implored to increase the number and volume of springs throughout the Hermon country.

In addition to the elaborate veneration of the mountain on its highest peaks, it appears that the inhabitants of its valleys and foothills built about it a remarkable series of large and small temples in a vast ellipse, whose main axis runs, as does the present international boundary, from north to south.

Archaeologists now dispute the once current belief that all of these more-than-twelve temples (Banias, Qalaat Bosra, Hibbarie, Ain Ata, Ain Harshe, Nebi Saf, Ayeha, Rakhle, Deir el Ashayir, Bekaa, Borqosh, Hine among other sites) encircling Hermon are oriented toward the sacred peak, as the world's mosques are oriented toward Mecca. But some of them are oriented toward the sacred peak, including the very ancient one of Ain Ata, and these no doubt had the triple divinity of Baal-Hermon (sometime represented by three rectangular vertical blocks) as their chief deity.

After Christianity was firmly established, there was no more need for worshipping on mountains to be closer to the gods, as churches and monasteries were built inside the cities and villages, except for some ancient pagan houses of worship which were transferred to monasteries for monks and nuns. Therefore, Mount Hermon was no longer viewed as a sacred place and as the abode of the gods until Jesus went through his transfiguration on its highest peak thus renewing its fame and sacredness.

The Hermon status remained as such until the arrival of the Crusaders and their occupation of Hasbaya (Baal-Gaad) and Rashaya on the western side of the mountain where they built fortresses.

At the rise of Islam, there came with the Mohammedan army the tribe of the Makhzoum, later known as Chehabs, whose prince

was killed at the Eastern gate of Damascus during their effort to capture the city.

The Chehabs lived to the south of Damascus around the city of Shahaba near the Ghosain tribe with whom they had endless quarrels. In due course, the Chehabs' number increased in Houran and in due course there brewed a quarrel between the Sultan of Egypt, the famous Saladin (1137-1193) and his enemy Nur ad-Din of Damascus. Being friendly with Saladin, the Chehabs were afraid of being caught between two fires once the war starts between these two powerful leaders, so they decided to migrate to a safer place, striking toward the River Jordan near the Sea of Galilee. When the Sultan Nur ad-Din heard of the Chehabs migration from Houran, he asked them the reason when no one was molesting them. They answered saying that wherever they go they will remain his loyal servants but could not possibly return to Houran on account of the drought, which hit the land for consecutive years forcing them to seek pastures for their animals. Sultan Nur ad-Din then permitted them to go wherever they chose. They were about ten thousand in number and the first plan was to attack the Crusaders at Hasbaya and Rashaya and drive them out of the land called Wadi el-Tiam.

They struck north, and the Crusader Knights (2nd Crusade, 1148) met them at the plains of what is known now as Suk el-Khan near the course of the Hasbani River. At the first encounter, the Crusaders found themselves out-numbered ten to one and so withdrew to the safety of their fort at Hasbaya where they were besieged for several months. Finally, they were permitted to leave Hasbaya minus their arms. From Hasbaya, the Chahabis marched on north to Rashaya, which surrendered on the same principles as Hasbaya and followed their comrades to the powerful Beau Fort on the cliff overlooking the Litani River to the west.

What concerns us in this discourse is what happened to Mount Hermon during the Chahabis' occupation and rule of the land on this side of the mountain, especially during the reign of the Prince Najemudin who was a very just ruler and who in 1194 built himself a beautiful house on one of the summits of Mount Hermon in which he used to spend all the summer months, taking with him all those whose company he would enjoy. Amir Najemudin was also a poet in

classical Arabic and in the praise of the mountain and his life there, he had written some beautiful Arabic poems.

A house I built on the summit of Hermon,
Among music, songs and pleasure;
With the perfumed winds all around,
And beautiful

After this time, Mount Hermon was no longer mentioned as a sacred mountain or a place of importance, especially during the dreary days of the Turkish era (1450-1920).

About the middle of the 19th century when the European and American missionaries began to come to the country, they soon developed the habit of mounting horses, hiring guides and loading their beds and provisions on mules to scale the mountain to remain a night or two, following the footsteps of Jesus and returning bright and happy.

When the World War of 1914 broke out, the Turks closed all the schools of the missionaries who returned home. Visits to the mountain came to a standstill, save for an occasional visit by spirited young men from this side of the mountain that visited its peaks.

But at the present time, our sacred mountain has passed through developments which it had never seen, not even in its saddest of dreams! This began when the Arab League opened a road at its western foot from north to south with side roads connecting it with the Hasbaya-Rashaya Road through the villages of Kfeir, Ain Atta, Ain Hirsha and on north. About 1970, this road was given the name of Arafat Trail. It was intended for the Palestinian warriors to pass on their way down south to the frontiers, but in due course when the Palestinians began to harass the Israelis, the latter responded from the Mediterranean Sea to Mt. Hermon, pushing up almost to Beirut-Damascus highway, and not only that, but they opened roads at the crest of the Hermon range.

It was not long until the Israelis withdrew and at present there is a battalion of Austrian soldiers, part of the United Nations Peace Force, camping atop the mountain. With naked eyes, we can see their vehicles day and night.

The Rivers of Mt. Hermon

The Mountain has been most generous to those who live on its slopes, first by letting the water flow from all its sides in such a huge volume making the land around a paradise on earth. Here are some of these rivers and springs, which flow perennially. From the village of Ornah on its eastern foot gushes 365 springs, exactly as the number of the days of the year. From its northern tip gushes the Barada and Awaj Rivers, which supply Damascus with its scented water.

The Bible tells us that once there was a king in Damascus who fell sick with leprosy and was advised to wash in waters of the Jordan River to be cured. The king became angry and told the man that the waters of the Abana and Awaj is worth all the waters of Israel. The people as well as the land of several villages east and south of it depend on its water in their jurisdictions for drinking and irrigation.

The following are the rivers which gush out of its sides. Besides the above-mentioned two in its eastern side there are many on its southern and western sides such as the Banyasi, Joz, Wazani, Moghara, Hasbani, Ladan, Majdal Shams, Biet Jan, Moghor and Ornah.

The rivers which run during winter, spring and part of summer around the mountain are the following: Fatir, Ghomosaya, Bousis, Abou Jaji, Hima, Sabroun, Skain, Dafrani, and many others of lesser volume.

Before the arrival of refrigerators, Mt Hermon's snow cooled the people's drinking water through the summer months and its snow was the chief element in the manufacturing of ice cream. Its slopes are the best grazing ground for goats, cows, horses and other animals. The roots of its Zalouh when boiled, tops the best-manufactured vitamin in the world. Before the arrival of the gasoline motor, the water of rivers turned the stones of wheat mills found all around the mountain, but now they are all in ruins.

Wild Life of Mt. Hermon

Many of the wild animals which once lived on its slopes when it was covered with wild trees after its very ancient volcanic

period were exterminated, but others survived. Those which have vanished were the lion, the tiger, the hyena, the boar, the bear and more; while those that remained (but in small number) are the wolf, the jackal, the fox, the rabbit, the anteater and others.

Very little is seen of the migratory birds that used to fly south for the winter months and then return north for summer, except for a few coveys in September. The eagle and the vultures usually come around when they scent a dead animal. Many of the quails visit us from season to season but in small numbers during olive season. Of the small birds, we still have the house wren, the warbler, the swallow, the sparrow, the lark, the wild dove, the fly-eater, the hawk and the crow and above all, the prince of the mountain, the partridge.

During the French Mandate (1923-1946), the authorities encouraged skiing on the slopes of the mountain and to facilitate the project, they opened a road from Rashaya direct to the excellent skiing ground. The project lived for a while but died, as it is situated too far from the abodes of skiers, and the locals were not ready for such an expensive sport.

And to this noble edifice we reverently say: Peace on your birth, on your life, on your death and on the day of your resurrection.

2

ORIGINS AND SURROUNDINGS

The word "Kfeir" comes to us from the ancient Aramaic language, the language spoken by Jesus Christ; it means a village or an area. It was called Kfeir el-Zait, meaning the Village of Oils, because its lands in any direction are very rich with the trees and plants that produce oils, such as olive, turpentine and castor oil. Up until the present time, the land around Kfeir is still treasured with the remains of ancient oil presses. What we see now consists of pressing stones, troughs, one or two courses of the main building and, scattered here and there, well-dressed stones. These relics of by-gone civilizations are found at Birkit el-Rahib (Pond of the Monk), about 650 feet or more west of the villages and at Zakzuk and Ain el-Kiroum, 2.5 miles to the north of the village. While east from the village, there is one in the pine forest and another in the Moukythia area east of the village and others in the land jurisdiction of the village.

During the Turkish Ottoman regime which lasted over four hundred years, the French Mandate that remained twenty-eight years as well as the present independent Lebanese Government, they have all printed the name of the village as "Kfeir Zait" or "Kfeir Zaihat" or "Kfeir Zayat" and almost every map I saw printed the name of our village in a way entirely different from the other. This variation is to be found on both civil and military maps according to the way the mapmaker pronounces his Arabic vowels. We, the inhabitants of the village, speak of it as Kfeir only, omitting the oily appendage.

Kfeir is situated on the western slope of the holy Mount Hermon where Jesus Christ is supposed to have undergone his transfiguration

and, at an elevation of some 3117 ft. above sea level, Kfeir commands a bewitching view of the lofty mountains rolling hills.

To the east stands the hoary majestic ranges of the lofty Mount Hermon with its fascinating broken skyline and snow-mantled summits in an effulgent charm. Looking down from the Hermon range, one beholds the lofty peak of the Wastani Mountain with its dun-colored clusters upon clusters of towering crags, sprinkled here and there with some ancient green oak trees and patches of vineyards in perennial beauty. Here, too, are the prominent depressions crowned with gray crags enforcing the impression.

Nearer still and towards the village there is a beautiful and picturesque sash of red sandy earth held in place by rocks about 1500 feet in width with deep valleys and canyons overlapping one bracken after another of wild and domestic pine and spruce trees, green as the spring wind. This sash of sandy earth stretches from the Beirut-Damascus highway in the north and reaches as far as the Palestinian border in the south; sometimes it is wide, at other times it is narrow and occasionally it disappears completely to reappear again, exactly like a symphonic string, and its creation in this land is a glorious symphony in the sense—"Old World Symphony," with an apology to Antonin Dvorak, composer of "The New World Symphony."

Here, too, are the orchards of our best fig trees. To the southeast of this sandy sash there is our large and famous Nashabi Forest of oak trees that remain annually green against the scraggy-gray Toura Mountain high up to the southeast. The Nashabi Forest has some valuable and rich engravings and antiquities dating back to Canaanite, Phoenician, Greek, Roman and Palmyra eras, perhaps during the era of that brave, intelligent, and colorful queen, Zenobia.

To the north of the Kfeir and as far as the Ghomoussaya River about five miles away and farther north, stretches of land beyond the Shahil Mountain over-riding the village houses, the whole region some fifty years ago was planted with grape vines, constituting one of the village's chief sources of income of grapes and its by-products; but the phyloxera, a disease which came to us from Palestine like the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse, destroyed our grape vines completely. This area is now planted with olive

trees that need less care and yield fairly well.

To the south of Kfeir and across the river below and farther uphill, as far as the land of the small village of Khalwat el-Kfeir, about a kilometer and a half above the river, the land here constitutes an admixture of sand, red and sometimes yellow soil, which tenders it one of the most fertile of our lands, suitable exclusively for tree plantation and growing of all species. It was indeed and still our garden where we see wild trees, such as oak, turpentine, poplar, acorn and reed. Bushes grow side-by-side with olives, figs, apples, walnuts, plums, almonds, pears, pistachios and cherries. Also found are grape vines hanging on random stonewalls or loosely on fruit trees.

Here also, there are several springs with running water where people usually plant summer vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, squash, eggplant, muktha and cucumber. The leading of these springs is the Lanerouri, which was used as the meeting place for young men and young women of the village, also the school students on their outings.

Another of these springs is the Zakani from which Khalwat el-Kfeir gets its drinking water. Some years ago, the Government built a reservoir above Khalwat, installed a pumping station to distribute water to the houses of the village.

The land from the riverbed below Kfeir and on westward as far as the land of the village of Meimess is now planted with olives also, and on both banks of the river.

Starting west from the last house on the western side of Kfeir and going as far as the Fatir River some three miles away, the land is now planted with olives, some new, some old, others very ancient. From the Fatire River and on westward, the land is devoted to wheat sowing. On the eastern side of the river and on north the land is now planted with olives also, when stretches of land permit, as far as the Sifini hamlet.

A word about this fertile land of Sifini is worthy of note. From time immemorial, the Hamlet of Sifini had been in the county of Rashaya to the north of Kfeir. The distance between Kfeir and Rashaya is some 11.6 miles, which before the automobile, the people had to travel either by walking or riding their donkeys, mules, and horses.

Whenever the people of Kfeir had something to do concerning their Sifini land, they had to travel to Rashaya to settle their problems at the government concerned department, rain or shine they had to do it or risk heavy fines! This procedure was causing the Kfeirians an everlasting headache and an ugly inconvenience.

After World War I, when Syria became an independent state for only two years and the counties of Hasbaya and Rashaya were a part of Syrian territory, Faris Bey El-Khoury was a minister in the Syrian government, and through his effort, the Sifini hamlet was transferred from Rashaya district to Hasbaya.

The Sifini hamlet had a few houses, one of which was to a Kfeirian, the others to people from Ain Atta to the north and other places. They are all now in ruins. Almost all the land of Sifini belongs to the Kfeirians. It has abundance of water all year around but unfortunately is not utilized. In winter, its stream is strong enough to turn a mill's wheat crushing stone, the ruins of which still exist. The houses there once belonged to the Naufals of Kfeir, Whazall of Ain Atta and Abou Ziki of Chouf region. The shrine there of the Druze prophet Shoieb is still standing and well kept and people go there to visit and spend the day.

Some years ago, the Lebanese government allocated money for a water project to irrigate the fertile land of Sifini, but the money evaporated before the project was half finished and ever since that time no effort was made to carry it on.

With the introduction of mechanical farming, it is anticipated that the plantation of productive trees and land development would increase appreciably. All that is currently needed is peace and security and, in the course of time a few agricultural roads, the implementation of which, at the present, is far and remote like catching the wind with one's naked hand.

As a result of the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon, including much of the county of Hasbaya, Kfeir and neighboring villages are cut off from their governmental center. Their fate is in the balance until a time only the gods know when!

3

THE VILLAGE PROPER

Perched horizontally on its slope at an elevation of some 3300 ft. in its highest point and about 2625 ft. in its lowest dwelling over sea level, Kfeir now exceeds one and a quarter mile in length from east to west and about .9 mile from north to south. Looking at it from the adjacent concrete flat roofs, sprinkled here and there with a very few red brick pyramidal ones among its overlapping orchards and gardens; the panorama gives the appearance of a beautiful picture in bas-relief on emerald green deep sea Chinese majolica.

The entire landscape all around the village is that of a huge basin. It is so evenly molded in all directions, save the eastern side where the Wastani Mountain is somewhat higher than the others to the north, south and west with its fascinating broken skyline. It tempts one to think that some gigantic hand holding an equally gigantic compass, which naturally is the Mother Nature, shaped this basin. Our early ancient ancestors must have been a very scientifically minded and intelligent race of people and not only that, but exceedingly shrewd judges in climatic conditions and weather variations to choose such a fascinating and healthy spot at the right angle of the sun with its abundance of water for their village, the like of which one seldom encounters in any other region in the area.

Kfeir now has over three hundred houses with a population in the neighborhood or over two thousand inhabitants, all of them live in good, modern, sanitary and well-furnished houses of stone and cement blocks, coupled with a healthy invigorating climate that tops any of the best summer resorts in the Middle East.

The tawny, barren Shahil Mountain to the north protects it from the inclemency of the bitter cold north winds in winter. The lofty

Mount Hermon ranges to the east stand as a bulwark, shielding it from the dry and suffocating east winds that come to us from the arid Syrian Desert during the summer months. The deep and verdant valley below the village, with its abundance of year-around water, serves as a natural corridor for the refreshing west and south winds and the cool zephyr that comes to us from the blue Mediterranean Sea, loaded with moisture and the heavenly dew; and so we have refreshing air from the west and a suffocating inferno from the east—a predicament which also applies itself to our political history since Creation and it may remain with us till Kingdom Come!

The yearly average rainfall is around 35 inches and the hottest day sends the mercury flirting around 90 degrees Fahrenheit, but rarely higher. The coldest days in winter may reach zero, but this seldom occurs. Snow sometimes reaches as high as 20 inches but melts very quickly. Flood, storms, cyclones and tornados are unknown, and our four seasons are very polite boys; they do not steal from each other, each remaining on its side of the border!

With the increase of house building previously financed by money coming from America, but now from the oil rich Arab countries, the village is spreading to the east and north. The old Druze thrashing floors to the northeast have now disappeared and modern houses were built in their places, thus becoming a modern residential quarter to the north and west of this new quarter and as far up as the electricity following their heels.

The Christian thrashing floor to the west and north of the Christian Quarter are suffering the same fate but on a slower pace. It is expected that in about ten or less years from now, and at the same construction rate, that Christian thrashing floors will disappear and their old and romantic days of songs, teams of oxen, thrashing boards with boys on them and chaff separation from wheat or grains by means of hand winnowers and voluntary communal help, will be a legend and a folklore of bygone days. This ancient process has given way to mechanical separation carried out by machines manufactured in the Island of Cyprus.

One seldom sees old thatched or dirt roofs in the village. Re-enforced concrete is the prevailing style. Gone are the days of tiresome roof rolling with a stone roller pulled by wooden or iron books called

Maouss and the consequent water dripping on the sleeping children and parents alike to be stopped by rolling the roof even at midnight and under showers of rain and in violent wind. The snow, which was once cleared off roofs by wooden shovels, is now left to melt at its will and pleasure.

All the village houses now have running water, painted walls, tiled floor areas, modern kitchens, modern bathrooms and likewise rest rooms, individual private rooms, dining rooms, reception halls and salons. All village houses are now well furnished. The people now use fuel oil for heating in winter times and cooking is done on butane gas.

Some years ago, the Lebanese Government helped build our electricity project, replacing the network of timber posts with planted iron poles in its place. Our system was connected with the countrywide electricity network, the power of which is generated through the government-owned gigantic Litani River hydroelectric project at 220-volt power, instead of our old one at 110 volts, and at cheaper rates, supplying us constantly, day and night, with electrical current.

About twenty or more years ago Kfeir became a municipality, founded by popular vote like the rest of the country towns. Since that time, no new election has taken place because of the prevailing unrest and chaotic state of affairs the country is passing through. There is also the bloody war the country has seen raging all these years, during which several council members passed away including the mayor himself.

For the past several years, the mail service has come to a standstill because of the war. As long as the Beirut Airport is regularly under bombardment, no mail goes out or comes in except once in a blue moon! Our telephone service was cut to pieces and the wires and poles were taken away in the same manner, as with the telegraph service after the Turkish withdrawal from the country in 1918. Now, the good Lord knows when our telephone service will be restored!

Before closing this chapter, it is well to say something about three important and historical features of the village.

- **The Ain.** The impressive ain or public fountain is so ancient that it is hard to tell when it was so beautifully built! It consists of three arches and a long trough or reservoir oriented east and west facing the sun. The reservoir situated to the extreme left of the round arches is about 20 feet in length and about 3.25 feet width and about 31.5 inches in depth. The water in it is reserved for animals and only at night for the irrigation of some nearby summer vegetables. The three arches have the same dimensions, namely 9.8 feet in height and 6.5 feet in length by 24 inches in width and about 22 inches in depth. The center arch has the main water sprout in the wall from which the people get their drinking water; the surplus goes to the other troughs below the arches through holes in their abutments.



Figure 4 The Ain of Kfeir

- **The Straight Street.** The other noticeable feature in the village is its straight street, which cuts it from its extreme east to its extreme west, dividing it into two equal halves. It must have been a very straight street in ancient times and wide enough to allow carriages to pass on it to and fro. Many important old and new cities in the world have such straight streets, the Fifth Avenue in New York and the street called

the Straight in Damascus are more than famous. All of which are a fine example of eastern town planning. But through the ages, our street has been subjected to encroachment on all its sides by lawless building carried out by equally lawless people, because when there is no fence (government), the wolf would eat the goat.

- **The Public Square.** The third is the exceptionally large and spacious public square which, once upon a time, had two circles of large smoothly dressed stone slabs 17x20x35 inches, one small inside a larger one, situated in its southwestern side, presumably to be a Roman council seat or a forum. The stones of this relic were foolishly and ignorantly broken to pieces when the square was asphalted a few years back. The square, despite the stealing of all its sides through the ages, remains one of the largest squares in Lebanon and Syria. The only two squares I know of larger than ours are the Al-Burj in Beirut and Al-Marja in Damascus; even the latter is not much larger than ours with all its misfortunes.

All the streets of the village are either asphalted or cemented and kept in a fairly good condition, which at times is nothing to write home about, providing the Israeli huge tanks do not strut their stuff on them, leaving them in a dilapidated state. Realizing the havoc their tanks, half-tracks and chained vehicles had done to our streets, the Israelis excavated a side road to the east of the village through the Ouwyjeh Forest on which they travelled for a short time, only before returning, leaving us out of their occupied zone.

4

ANCIENT RELIGIONS

Perhaps the earliest suspected religion at Kfeir and the regions around Mount Hermon was sun worshipping, as engravings of its symbols on rocks and stones at Sha'ith near here and in the Nashabi forest indicate. On the eastern side of the Nashabi forest are man-made caves where engravings of the sun, moon and stars are seen. Could it be that the ancient dwellers of these regions are like free masons holding their meetings in isolated caves, using them as lodges?

The strongest indication of the sanctity of the Bruge (fort) in our Nashabi forest comes from a little platform on a rocky point overlooking the valley below. Here is seen the ruins of the oldest primitive temple of roughly fitted stones, some virtually uncut, others obviously reused from earlier antique structures. It is not a notable ruin and would not be mentioned here except for its possession of a single stone step leading up to a platform around the temple, an oblong gray, dun-colored stone slab containing, carved in bas-relief on its face, two primitive symbols. The left one is the conventional symbol of Ishtar of the Carthaginian Goddess Tanit—a triangle with a head and two uplifted arms. The right figure is simply the disk of Ra (the sun). Both of these are known to have been used by early Phoenicians under Egyptian influence and in the form in which they appear on this stone probably dating from the Second Iron Age (1000—585 BCE).

About one and a quarter mile to the north of the above-mentioned temple in our Wastani Mountain overlooking the Wadi Hassoun and on a very rough cluster of rocks there stands the ruins of one

of those ancient temples. A few yards from the heap of crumbling dressed stones, there is to be found a long era of paganism, feared by the people but held as the source of all living things. This must have been practiced hundreds of years or probably thousands before they began to worship the Baal Baal—whom they created and made their supreme god. Whether sun worshipping came to us from the Phoenicians or it travelled from here to them and then on to Egypt and finally to Carthage with Elissar and those daring Phoenician sailors is rather puzzling.

In Arabic the word "Baal" has several meanings. Such as husband, dry or dry farming. A woman may say my Baal, meaning husband, we say this land is Baal, meaning it produces crops on dry farming. It seems that during the Baal worshipping era which preceded Christianity in our area, the people began to come down from the sun, moon and stars to life's solid facts. Realizing that the land was their only means of living, the rocky mountain slopes were terraced to protect the soil. Without nearby rivers to furnish irrigation, they learned to depend on dry-farming, which they did with success. And so, their Baal land developed remarkably well and Baal became their idol and finally their supreme god.

Baal worshipping covered the entire Middle East and beyond, flourishing in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Northern Arabia and Mesopotamia. The Phoenician merchants and sailors with their braided beards carried it to countries around Africa, Europe and perhaps, Central and South America. Its golden era, besides Lebanon, was in Assyria, where colossal temples and theatres were built in its honor. Many cities and towns were named after Baal, the most famous of which are Baalbek, Baal Gilaad, Baal Shamy and a good number of others.

To Baal, the people also built temples on both sides of Mount Hermon. The most sacred of these temples is the one on the crest of the mountain itself. Today the crest of the second Hermon three summits, called Kasr Antar, still shows vestige of the small temple of the Roman period. What is more interesting, however, is the great circular wall of the well-dressed masonry—two courses still visible—which encircle the 16-foot cone of the summit proper. This is a typical

feature of nearly all Semitic places of worship, probably marking the limit of circumambulation of the sacred cone, a rite still perpetuated at Qaaba in Mecca. The cone itself has a funnel-like rock some 15 feet in diameter, which no doubt served as the basin into which water from seas, lakes, rivers and wells was ceremoniously poured in the ancient rites, imploring the God Baal of the Mountain to increase the number and volume of springs and consequently their water throughout the Mount Hermon country. On the way to the Nashabi forest and at a place called Barbara there stands a rock about 8.2 feet in height and about 4.9 feet in width, with a round basin dug on its top with funnels running in all directions. This may have been an altar where sacrifices were offered.

In addition to this elaborate veneration of the mountain on its highest peak, it appears that the inhabitants of the valleys and foothills built a remarkable series of large and small temples in a vast ellipse, whose main axis runs, as does the present international boundary, from northeast to southeast. These temples are to be found at Banyas, Kalaat Bosra, Rakhle, Dier al Ashayr, Beka, Borkous and Hina east of the mountain. In Lebanon and on the western side of the mountain, there were temples built at Ain Atta, Ain Hersha, Kfeir, Hibarya, Nabi Safa, Ayha, Kfar Mishki and Loubaya, encircling Mount Hermon and oriented towards the sacred peak.[9]

The Baal era reached a golden period in ancient Syria covering many fields, such as commerce, arts, literature, laws, military science, conquest and education. Their art on stones and bricks is throbbing with life and action. Their literature, in prose as well as poetry, is unexcelled. The Epic of Gilgamesh (c. 1155 CE), a masterpiece of epic poetry, has stood the test of time and has been translated to many languages. Their commerce reached an advanced stage of progress, covering their colonies and neighboring countries. Their empire was large, far-flung and prosperous despite the Barbarians' attack on its fringes. Their system of education was the best in the known world in that time, even though they wrote on clay tablets. The famous law school in Beirut stood as a lighthouse on this side of the Mediterranean. The famous laws of

[9] Mt. Hermon is now occupied by the United Nations Truce Forces and to which the Israelis had opened an automobile road all along the crest of the mountain from south to north with another road coming from the Syrian side.

Hammurabi[10] do not need to be praised. Their armies conquered all the alien people around them and the Assyrian soldier has been a model in bravery and daring. Their magnificent art in architecture inspired several of the Seven Wonders of the World.

In addition to Baal, the people had created several subordinate gods—a president and a cabinet—in the sense! Each of these gods and goddesses was entrusted with certain fixed duties. There was Adonis, who looked after the fine arts, Bacchus who looked after the vineyards and wines and Ishtar, the goddess of love and beauty. There was Ananth for war, Yam for water and seas and a host of subordinate gods.

During this period through the Roman occupation of ancient Syria, some Syrian and Phoenicians became Roman emperors. Philip of Houran was a famous and just emperor and from 192-235 CE, the dynasty of Septimius Severus ruled the Empire. Septimius Severus was a Phoenician general from Africa. Of his line was Caracalla, his son, who took the statues of his Phoenician gods to Rome forcing the people of that proud city to bow to them! He married a Syrian woman who introduced to the Roman palace an Oriental touch.

Obviously during that era, Kfeir had reached a high degree of development and prosperity, becoming the center of that pagan religion and perhaps one of its capitals and a gathering center for the pilgrims on their way to the crest of Mount Herman for their annual religious festivities. This is based on the fact that the public square of Kfeir, as stated earlier, is still the largest between Beirut and Damascus. Ever since the coming of Christianity, orthodoxy has been the dominating sect at Kfeir, as well as the whole of Wadi el-Tayme which includes Hasbaya and Rashaya districts. When did it come to us? We have no authentic record. We know that the inhabitants of these regions were pagans but whether they embraced the Christian faith before the Roman Emperor at Constantinople had embraced it or after, is not known. Saint Jerome (340—420 CE) who translated the Bible into Latin, says that the pagans still

[10] The Code of Hammurabi is a Babylonian legal text composed c. 1755–1750 BCE. It is the longest, best-organized and best-preserved legal text from the ancient Near East. It is written in the Old Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, purportedly by Hammurabi, sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon.

worshipped at the top of Baal-Hermon "at the celebrated temples" found there.

When the Mohammadan conquest of the Middle East began, the people of the region were Christians. During the Crusaders' era in 1172, the Shihabi princess came from Syria and drove the Crusaders out of the province only to be driven out themselves by the Tartars a hundred years after but only for a short time. When the Shihabi Princes returned to the area, they found it ravaged and burnt to ashes by the invaders, who had robbed and left. The princes had a hard time convincing the inhabitants to return to their burnt homes.

It has been historically established that a Druze family by the name of Khattib was the first family to settle at Kfeir after the Tartars' invasion. This family later became known as Awad. Almost a hundred years after the Khattio's coming to Kier, came a Christian family called Sabeh.

Late in the 19th century, Protestantism came to Kfeir and it too did not flourish despite the efforts of the missionaries who built a school, sent teachers and purchased some vineyards. After almost fifty years of ups and downs, the school building was sold and the vineyard was given away to the Druze man who used to serve them.

Catholicism also came to Kfeir but the number of its adherents did not increase much, only five or six houses. Its number increased appreciatively when for some reason or another, the large Abou Jamara family suddenly turned Catholic. They built the present Catholic church, but they did not remain long in the sect and returned to their mother orthodoxy.

About eight or nine hundred years ago, a man in Egypt began preaching for a new sect in Islam. He was persecuted and fled to Lebanon with his followers. They lived in the Chouf District east of Sidon and were known as Druze. Here, too, they were persecuted by the Moslem Sunni sect and forced to flee to the thickets of Wadi al-Taym, settling here. They kept their religious beliefs in utmost secrecy. Besides Chouf and Wadi al-Taym, the Druze are to be found in Syria at Aleppo, Damascus, Houran and Wadi al-Ajam and also in Northern Palestine.

5

CAVES AND OLD SETTLEMENTS

There are a number of man-made caves around Kfeir, which were patiently and perseveringly carved from solid rock. Some of these caves consist of a single room, others of two or three rooms with a vestibule in the center. They have been chiseled from sandstone, lime, basalt or solid rock according to the nature of the earth and the locality in which they are found. They are located west, north and east of the village but none in the south. About four miles west of the village and across the Fatir River some sixteen hundred feet uphill below what is called Memiess Pond (where rainwater is stored to serve the cattle during the dry summer months) in a huge basaltic rock, one of these caves had been carved. Its door is oriented southeast according to the position of the rock itself. The entrance to the cave is about 3¼ feet square. The inside is the conventional circular place filled almost to the vaulted ceiling with earth and stones.

Crossing the Fatir River eastward and coming up about two hundred yards above its course and atop of a very steep ridge in a large lime rock, the ancestors had chiseled one of the most beautiful caves I had ever seen (besides the numerous ones at Maaloula Mountain in Syria where the shrine of St. Takla is found.) In a way, it is a quaint little house. The door or the entrance is about five feet in height and about 3.28 feet in width, leading to a circular vestibule, the axis of which is about ten feet. From this vestibule an oblong room about ten feet by six and a half as the right-side branches out, while at the left there is another room about ten by thirty feet. The ceiling of all these rooms is about six and a half feet, allowing a person to move freely around. It is strange indeed, as it

may sound, that it is very clean inside and we used to spend a few hours inside of it resting during the noonday heat while hunting the partridges and the quails as there are no trees in the vicinity.

About three miles directly north of the above-mentioned cave and east of the Fatir River also and in the Sifina region on a rose-colored precipice, there is in a long cluster of crags another of these ancient caves, the door of which is oriented towards the rising sun. The entrance itself is about five feet in height and three feet in width, leading to a corridor about six and a half feet in length, which leads to another door smaller than the entrance, above which the statue of a man with a long staff in hand had been chiseled. It may be the statue of the god of thunder and lightning or be like Neptune or Mars! Time had wrought havoc on the face of this small statue measuring about 16 by 12 inches on the lintel. The inside of the cave has been filled with debris, earth and stones but the upper parts of the three sarcophagi are to be seen around the circular wall in which they were carved: one small and two large.

About one hundred sixty feet above the Rahall's quarter in the northern section of the village there is another one of these man-made caves, which is entirely different from the others. Instead of one door it has three: one large in the center flanked by one small at each side. They are not of the conventional square type but as an archway. It has several graves at its sides.

About three hundred feet east of this cave and above the Abou-Izz houses, a cave is also chiseled in the gray rock with the same dimension as the others with several graves chiseled on its sides. About a hundred yards east of this cave there is a grave dug in the open rock but filled with small stones and earth. East of the village, there are a number of natural caves called Arab caves, made by nature in the same manner as the huge cave at Beit el-Zinar rock, which can house several heads of cattle. Finally, there is one cave in the sandy rock to the south of the Nashabi Forest, but small and of no significance.

The above-mentioned caves with their stone graves are presumed to be Canaanite of the late Iron Ages. About two miles east-south of the village and in the Nashabi Forest there is a tomb and a sarcophagus which are a personification of fine art and clever

workmanship, believed to be of a later period than the previous ones. The lower part of the grave is dug in a gray rock with an entrance-oriented southwest. Placed above it is a sarcophagus about six and a half feet in length by forty-by-forty inches in height and width. The face is in bas-relief and inside a frame is the face of man and in the other frame is a sleeping beauty with a small man with a tail hovering over her head. The eastern side shows two men holding each other's hand and a rope around their necks and down to their feet. The opposite side and above the entrance to the grave there are pictures of men but badly obliterated. The lid, which is of the same kind of stone, was thrown about 20 feet from the grave. It shows the statues of a man, a woman and a child, all of which are bare headed and holding their right hands under their togas in the same manner as the many statues discovered in Palmyra and on view at the Damascus Museum.

The vestige of the ancient settlements around Kfeir are numerous and noteworthy. They indicate that in the days of yore the inhabitants of these regions depended chiefly on agriculture and cattle. It has been historically established that the sokari (seckel) pears[11] of the Wastani Mountain were taken to the banquet tables of the Roman emperors.

During the Roman occupation of the ancient Syria, which included Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and the territory in the north and west seized by Turkey, it had a population of 35 million. Judging by the large public square of the village, one ventures to say that it enjoyed a large population of no less than five thousand persons or more.

Looking around the village and particularly in the ruins of Sheath in the Nashabi Forest and the still standing courses of the many houses, large and small and the numerous graves dug in the rocks under ancient oak trees with a spring of water nearby, one can safely say that no less than five thousand persons had once lived here.

The huge temple to be found at Khan, became a caravansary, serving in ancient time as a rest house for the caravans on their

[11] Seckels (pronounced SEK-els) are tiny pears, with a chubby, round body, small neck and short stem. Their skin is usually olive green, but frequently exhibits a dark maroon blush that sometimes covers the entire surface of the pear.

way to and from Damascus, and also as a resting place for the pilgrims on their way up to the shrine of their gods at the crest of the Hermon Mountain to carry on their annual bacchanalian festivals. The deep cistern near the main building of the Khan still holds its white plaster indicating that the people here depended on stored water for their drinking and other purposes. The bottom of this cistern is not visible because the large portion of its depth is filled with earth and stones. The part that is not filled is about twenty feet in depth. Maybe there is a spring at the bottom of this well as wild berries grow by it. The most interesting sight of the place is the huge lintel on which a picture of the Sun God is in a frame and another picture of the same size of Venus. The stone had fallen down and is now turned upside down and broken in the center, but not affecting the engravings.

Ain el-Kiroum to the north of the village was once a thickly populated area. Up till now, long rows of what appeared to be shops are still visible and a few courses of the buildings still stand above the ground in addition to well dressed stones scattered here and there in the field. Obviously, the colony here was large on account of the abundance of water, a beautiful small fort near by dominating the valley below and guarding the road from shifting south or up to higher villages.

Down to the Sifini, its abundance of water and very fertile land of rich black or red earth for miles must have supported ten thousand or more persons. It is rich in ruins and well-dressed stones scattered here and there all over the fields and olive groves. The heaps of broken glass and potteries and the burnt earth and stones indicate that it was burnt down hundreds of years ago. We can't tell whether it was burnt by Arab or later by Mongols or Tartars.

About a mile west of the village there is the Sukara place where we see pieces of mosaic-tiled floors scattered here and there in the fields and olive orchards. The smooth basalt stones and the broken pillars and broken capitals of either basalt or gray fieldstones indicate that a very prosperous community had once lived here. It has been said that the water to Sukara was taken from Kfeir through pottery pipes along the wide street from the village where carriages used to go. It has also been said that the Sukara was

the summer resort of Kfeir's ancient aristocracy on account of its healthy climate. Atop its ridge overlooking the deep and verdant river valley below and the beautiful sceneries all around, there is nothing to obscure the eye sight for tens of miles in all directions. This place must have enjoyed a fairly good population.

Iraq Mountain, only a stone's throw west of the village has the vestige of an ancient settlement also. The pond and what is now called Deir el-Rahib (the Monastery of the Monk) with its huge well-dressed stones and scattered lintels shows that a fairly good community had dwelt here.

Wherever one goes around Kfeir and where there are water springs, there are always to be seen well-dressed stones and broken pottery pieces of various colors. The area must have been subjected to various savage wars, loot and destruction. The Bible tells us that when the Jews under the leadership of Joshua tried to push north of Dan, it was the people of our regions, the Amlecks and Canaanites who checked their advance till a few years back when the Israelis came from the south and pushed as far north as Damascus-Beirut Road.

6

HISTORY AND BATTLEFIELDS

As far back as the days of the Bible, and perhaps earlier, our regions have been the battlefields of aggressors and invaders who aspired to aggrandizement, loot, wealth, power and glory at the expense of other people! Being the natural gate between east and west and the time-honored territorial bridge between north and south, Lebanon, as well as Syria, have been the goal of every nation which aspired to become a world power. From time immemorial, these raiding, marauding, murdering invaders have hammered endlessly at our gates. When they did not come with a drum, a banner and a bluffing crackle of steel, they came with trade goods, trade barter, trade lies and gun powder.

Baal-Gaad of the Bible is believed to be either Kafr-Chouba or Choubaa or Hibariya that until now has an impressive pagan temple. Those bygone kingdoms had fought the Jews under Joshua and other Jewish generals who tried to conquer them time and again. Every time they were driven back minus their sandals!

In those olden days, our region was, most of the time, a part of the Kingdom of Phoenicia or its ally. Consequently, they must have participated in almost all the Phoenician defensive wars against Egyptians, Persians, Hittites, Jews, Greeks, as well as the invasions of Alexander the Great, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, the Wars of Zenobia, (the Desert Queen), the Barbarians from the North, the Arabs from the South, the Tartars, the Mongols, the Crusaders, the Turks, the Egyptians again and under Ibrahim Pasha, the Turks again. In modern times, the French, the British and finally after thousands of years, the Israelis, again.

Through the years, these wars have caused the population to

dwindle alarmingly. Instead of thirty-five million inhabitants in Syria proper, there were only seven million persons throughout Byzantine Syria at the end of the First World War. One may ask what accounts for this decrease? History tells us that when Khalid Ibn el-Walid attacked the Romans in Syria at the rise of Islam, he had under his command only twenty thousand men. To conquer a vast empire from China to the plains of Tours and north of the Pyrenees, an army needs hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Syria had them!

As early as the 12th Century and perhaps earlier, the presently known families of Kfeir began to settle in the nearly deserted village. This is the period of the late Crusaders' occupation of our area.

The Frankish Knights had occupied Hasbaiya and Rachaiya early in the 12th Century becoming the masters of Wadi el-Taym. They had also advanced east-south from Hasbaya and captured what is now known as the famous Nimrod Castle—a high rocky precipice near the village Ain Kniyat Banias overriding the Hula Plains to the south and overlooking the historical town of Caesarea Banias. These major fortifications with some other minor ones in the area, served as the Crusaders' first line of defense against any possible attack from either east or south. Their main forces were to the west in Beauport, Hounin and the coastal citadels of Sidon and Tyre.

At that time, Salah ad-Din, the Sultan of Egypt, was not on good terms with his rival, Nourudin of Damascus. The Chehabi Tribes had come from Hijaz with the Mohammad army under the name of Beni Makhzoub and settled in the northern part of Jabel Druze in and around Shahba. They were friendly with Salahuddin, but feared that if the two Sultans were to wage war against one another, Nourudin would attack them. Therefore, they decided to move westward before the potential storm. When Nourudin learned of the evacuation of their territory, he asked the reason for their sudden departure. They wrote back saying that their numbers had increased to about twelve thousand, and they were seeking a larger area with more water. However, they added that wherever they may be living they would always remain faithful to him and under his command. Nourudin issued them a royal degree, permitting them to drive the Crusaders out of Hasbaya and Rashaya and to

live there. On their march westward, they gathered followers until their number reached fifteen thousand.

Here they began harassing the Crusaders and skirmishing with them from time to time until finally they engaged in a pitched battle at the Plains of Suk el-Khan, only one kilometer to the south of the source of the Hasbani River. The Chehabis had the upper hand and the Crusaders withdrew to their citadel in Hasbaya. After a siege of some time, the garrison at Hasbaya fell and in due course Rashaya followed suit. Once their position was strongly consolidated here, they aspired to a larger territory to capture and rule. They found no better place than the Chouf District whose inhabitants were mostly Christians. Chihabis were nomads of Arabia to whom religion was a cloak which they wear upside down, downside up, inside out and outside in according to their whim and weather variations. Some of their princes turned Christian becoming leaders there. They still call each other cousins.

Their capture of Hasbaya was in 1172 and in 1259 the hordes of Mongols invaded the country with all the savagery and barbarism of their wild race. These Mongols were not armies of occupation, but raiders who attacked, killed, looted, burnt and then fled back to their Gobi Desert abodes. When they attacked Wadi El-Taym, the Chehabis princes and their followers gathered their forces but suddenly they found themselves besieged by the Mongols. Previous to these developments, the Chehabis had sent their old men, women and families to their cousins in the Chouf District. Time and again, the Chehabis attacked the Mongols to open a passage through the Mongol lines. Their attempts at first were futile but they finally succeeded in opening a gap in the line of the Mongol, but not before losing several hundreds of their best horsemen. The Mongols entered Hasbaya, looted and burned it with its neighboring villages, and then left, returning to their land.

When the Chehabis returned home everything in the region was ablaze. One is led to believe that Kfeir suffered the same fate as its neighboring villages, with its inhabitants either fled or put to the sword. Had Kfeir been deserted at the height of the Moslem invasion is another unanswered presumption. We have no historical and authentic traces of both invasions and the fate of Kfeir during

this period. It is well established that when the Chehabis returned to Hasbaya they urged the people to return and rebuild their homes. Few responded to the call, lest another invasion may take place and then all their labor and life would be in vain.

We believe that it was after the Mongol attack on the region that the first Druze family came to Kfeir. This family's name was then Khattib, but later and at present they are known as Awad. We know that they came from Lebanon, but when and from where we have no traces. We know that they settled near the public square and its running water which was a dense bushy area with wild boars roaming freely in it. On the site of the ancient crumbling palaces and mansions with their falling colonnades, their Tuscan pillars and their capitals scattered here and there, they hurriedly, haphazardly improvised their dwellings.

A hundred years later, the Sabah, a Christian family, came to Kfeir and settled in the extreme southern tip of the village, as we shall see in the coming chapters.

7

THE CHRISTIAN SETTLEMENT

The first Christian family to settle at Kfeir was the Sabieh. They came here about one hundred years after the Awads. They chose their dwellings in the extreme southern part of the village right below the quarter known as "Abou Rizk." Their few houses were built on the rocky precipice overlooking what was and still are known by the name of "Bassateen" (gardens), with the green valley and river below. Being atop that steep incline, the Sabieh houses command a very pleasant view of the countryside to the south, east and west and partly to the north. Being in a dominating position on the cliff, which is impossible to climb from the southern side, the valley below serves as a natural corridor for the cool, refreshing west winds. Even in the hottest of summer days, the wind here is so strong and so cool that it becomes disagreeably rough to open a window in the southern walls of the house. Fifty yards or more to the north, and the heat there could be suffocating!

The most striking phenomenon about these Sabieh houses is their usually large stones with which they were built; some of them are about two yards in length and about one yard and a half in height and one yard in width. The side of these stones is dressed but the face is left in its natural state. One presumes that these stones were once the walls of a citadel. Being in that strategic, impregnable place indicates that here was once a fort or a citadel.

After the Sabieh settlement at Kfeir, some Christian families began to come sporadically and at long intervals but not collectively. Here below is a non-conclusive list of the families that came to Kfeir and the approximate date of their coming. We note that since these families came from various localities in Syria and beyond,

it is logical to say that there was nothing in common between them. By every rule of nature, their behavior was characterized by rugged individualism and aloofness. They moved about with that stammering, suspicious step of the stranger who reckons with the inequality of the land, mistrusting others and quarrelling at the slightest provocation. This inherited trait still lurks in the people, but fortunately rarely comes out in force.

The Sabieh came in the 12th Century CE, the Abou Jamra in the 14th, the Khirbawi, El-Khoury, Haj, Abou Shalash, Sweitti, Saad, Tweel, Ghiz, Chantous, Fakhoury, Junied, Kassab, Hanna, all in the 15th. The Abou Rizk, Abou Nassir, Thabit, Sahly, Mikhail, Canteese, Lawen, McCarious in the 16th. The Carlous (later Khoury) Abou Farah, Bassett in the 17th. Malaab, Indraous, in the 18th. The Zakem and others in the 19th with Haj, Tomeh and Abi Rashid in the 20th Century.

Here below are the locations in the village where the various families built their homes, starting from the north-east side above the main street and east of the public square and going west. Here are the Bassetts, the Howranis, the Rizkallah, the Merji, McCarious, Ansara, Ghanttous, Amar, Abou Farah, Hanna, Abou Jamra, Kassab, Khoury, Rahall, Shamas, Carlous, Nassour, McCarus, Fakhoury, Sabian, Mikhail, Anbar, Lawen, Thabit, Cantees, Sabah, Abou Saab, Abou Nasser, Haj, Rahme, Abou Kalaka, Ghiz, Tweel, Tomeh, Jana and Juilan-Khoury.

Starting from the extreme western side of the village below the main street, we have the Tweel, Istfan, Skaff, Sahly, Abud, Lawen, Bassett, Khawaja, Abut Rizk, Sabieh, Saad, Malaab, Hawarni, Marji, Zakhem, Jouriess, Abou Shalash, Balus and Qudraam.

The early Christian settlers of Kfeir were not only farmers and land owners, but weavers, dyers, merchants, tradesmen, skilled and common labor men, carpenters, shoemakers, shoesmiths and carders. Their Druze neighbors were mostly farmers and goatherders who grazed their animals around the village. They also cleaned and cultivated the land they claimed. In due course, the Christians began to own land and at the turn of this century there were more than seventy-five Christian farmers in the village against twenty or twenty-five Druze. All the Christians became

large landowners, comparatively speaking.

The muleteers and cameleers brought the cotton and threads from Damascus and the weavers and carders at home did the rest. In each house there were as many spinning wheels as there were women and girls to shoulder the responsibility. There were over one hundred looms in the village, the cotton they carded, spun and wove.[12] The finished goods were died either indigo blue or red with only a small quantity left in its natural white color to be used as under shirts and pants. The goods were sold in neighboring villages and at the weekly marketplaces in the area. Sometimes, these old Kfeirian merchants and muleteers reached as far as Ghaza and Arish in southern Palestine. This is the reason why Kfeir was sometimes called "The Manchester of the East!"

It is very amazing to notice how our ancestors were at times so precise and matter-of-fact. Every locality, spot, stretch of land, fields, rocks, mountains, hills, valleys, areas, dales knolls, forests, had been given a name. Some of these names are simply Arabic; others do not sound Arabic. They may be Phoenician, Canaanite, Aramaic, Hittite, or some other language of those ancient people who invaded our area. These alien names are still in use. How did it happen that they are still in use when we know that when the first settlers came to the village there were no souls living in or around it? How these non-Arabic words lived through the centuries is puzzling. Were there some people of bygone civilizations living in these thick woods when the first settlers came here? If so, did they then speak their own language or languages and later mix with the newcomers and were assimilated with the Arabic-speaking communities? It is baffling! Here are some of these alien names: Ghoumoussya, Boussya, Hourbaya, Zourbaya, Kibwatha, Shawitha, Shilet, Moukythiya and Meimiss.

The new waves of settlers came to Kfeir from almost all parts of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Greece and perhaps some Crusaders off-shoots or ancient Romans as some names indicate, such as McCarious, Indrawis (Andrews), Caroulos (Carlos), etc. With their Druze neighbors, they lived in peace and harmony. As

[12] Carded cotton is cotton which has been prepared for spinning into thread or yarn. Carding removes debris and aligns the fibers to make them easier to spin. Without carding, cotton thread would be coarse and fragile.

the Druze came to the village some one hundred years before the Christians, they were in a position to acquire more of the best land. As time passed, the Christians increased in number and consequently, with money in their hands, they began to purchase land from the Druze and occasionally claim and develop free land. At that time, the Christian population of the village was at two-thirds and by the end of the last century the Christian community of Kfeir owned almost three-fourths of the village land to the west, south and north but not in the rocky mountains to the east. This supremacy in land ownership is still maintained, but not in population. In Beirut alone we have some fifty-five Kferian families and in North and South America some twenty thousand people or more.

What is true about Kfeir in this connection is also true about some neighboring villages such as Meimiss, Shiwya, Ain Kinya and Hasbaya which once had fifteen thousand Christians, but now does not have 15 houses and they are without a priest, despite their six churches!

8

THE CHURCH

The venerable Saint George church at Kfeir is large enough to be a small cathedral with its yard and a half thick stone walls and its precise masonry. One cannot pass a needlepoint between one stone and another, giving it the impression of sublimity and stability. Built some nine hundred years ago by the Abou Shalah family, it gives the appearance of a fortress. It has one single door, a few small windows in its southern and northern walls and a high vaulted ceiling.



Figure 5 St. George Orthodox Church

Ever since its construction, its officiating priests have been mostly of Kfeir. They came from such families as Khoury, Abou Rizk, Abou Shalash, Abou Jamra, Tweel, Khirbawi and others, once in a while from outside the town.

About twenty-five years ago, the late priest of Kfeir, Mikhail Abou Rizk, passed away and it was a rather impossible mission to have another priest from the village because the community was divided into two warring factions. They were jumping at each other's throats for no apparent reason or vital cause. One of the candidates over whom they fought was from Hasbaya and the other from Jdeidet, Marjayoun. Once one side presented an eligible young man to become a priest, the opposing side refused him "in toto." But the village had to have a priest to open the church on Sundays

for praying, conducting marriage, burial and baptism ceremonies. Kfeir is now the only remaining large Christian village in the area.

During this time and in the absence of a priest, the people had to invite clergymen from faraway places. A bishop's visit was too expensive because he came with his driver, archer, two priests and a deacon, all of whom had to be generously paid, a cost not affordable to the average Kfeirian.

As Kfeir has been under the direct mandate of the Patriarch in Damascus, and the people could not agree on one from their ranks, they requested the Patriarch in Damascus to send them a priest. Soon there came a young priest who was preparing himself to become the Bishop of Baghdad, but his elevation was postponed temporarily. He was a good priest, but he was always moody and somewhat dissatisfied with his present work as the priest of an isolated village on the slopes of Mount Hermon, even though the people were good and hospitable. He remained several months here and then returned to Damascus, leaving the village without a priest.

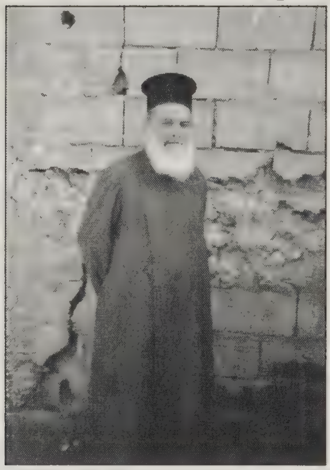


Figure 6
Priest Moussa Khoury, 1991

The neighboring city of Hasbaya, which once upon a time had a Christian population of some fifteen thousand persons and six large churches, three of which belonged to the Orthodox Community, finally succeeded in hiring a priest from Syria. The priest served Hasbaya for some time with an occasional visit to Kfeir when called upon, but he finally left Hasbaya to pursue theological studies in Greece.

Again, Hasbaya was able to bring in a priest who hailed from Beirut. He was rather old and came to us from time to time. Soon he passed away and Hasbaya, as well as Kfeir, both remained without priests.

Kfeir again approached the Patriarch for a priest and this time his Beatitude sent one who was very talkative and meddling which was impossible for the people to tolerate. He, however, remained

several months and then left. Again, the community was on the lookout for a priest and this time they found one in the Bekaa region who, during World War I was a highwayman. He, being rather old, remained here for a short time and then passed away.

Again, the church was without a priest. The good priest of the neighboring village of Ain Hirsha agreed to hold services for Kfeir once every two weeks and to come for weddings, baptisms and funeral ceremonies when called upon. He remained as such until the Israeli planes and guns destroyed the large Christian village of Rashaya el-Foukhar to the south, forcing its people to become refugees, along with their priest. We took in the priest and he has been here for the last twelve years.

9

SOURCES OF INCOME, OLD AND NEW

Up till 1920, the rich and prosperous Christian community of Wadi el-Tyme controlled the political, social, cultural and economic life of the province, and regrettable as it may sound, the story is entirely different now.

At the end of the last century and the beginning of the current one (1900), Kfeir enjoyed several excellent sources of income. There was the flourishing weaving industry and its trade with the neighboring markets including the Upper Galilee in Palestine. There were the grapes with their by-products of molasses, wine, arak and raisins. There were green and dry figs. There were the cocoons with by-products of silk and the cows and goats with their by-products of cheese, Labneh and milk. Also, there were the huge agricultural products of barley, lentil, horse beans, vetch[13], maize, corn and chickpeas. The money coming from the immigrant sons in the New World contributed substantially to the high standard of living the people were enjoying.

A good number of these sources have now vanished. Of the two hundred looms the village once had, none remained by the end of the First World War in 1918. The colossal onslaught of the European manufacturers and the cheap Japanese cotton goods on our market forced our small, primitive and crude industry out of business. It has been wisely said that the trade follows the flag and it was remarkably well applied in the Mandate territories of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

The artificial silk of China and Japan killed our cocoon industry in spite of the government's efforts to revive the industry for

[13] Vetch is a widely distributed scrambling herbaceous plant of the pea family, which is cultivated as a silage or fodder crop.

parachute threads and other goods. Of the more than one hundred farmers, each having three or four oxen to plough their land, only fifteen remain now. Of the one hundred or more strong common laborers, only ten or fifteen now remain and sometimes none because they find good work in Beirut or the oil-rich Arab states! The trade with Palestine (now Israel) has gone to Kingdom Come! A dreadful disease (the grape black rot fungus) killed our grapevines. With the Mandate, the French-owned tobacco monopoly did away with our tobacco plantation, and when, after independence, this industry was taken over by the Lebanese government, declaring our land not fit for tobacco plantation! Perhaps, this was because we were a part of Syria before the French mandate!

Because of the shortage of labor, even the import of inexpensive grains for sowing in our rocky land cannot be a source of profit, because working with the pick is slow and back-breaking. Thus, our vast and fertile area is left fallow for goats to graze and it is free of charge!

The money which used to come to Kfeir from the New World has dwindled down to less than ten percent of its former amount, on account of the death of the first generation of emigrants. The second and third generations can't possibly donate as did their fathers and forefathers, because they have their own economic problems to cope with, and after all, Kfeir is not a home land to them. Kfeir is a faraway place, somewhere in the Old World, from where their fathers and mothers had come!

For the sake of the humorous side of the tragedy, we relate here the following incident. Several years back, two candidates contested the Orthodox deputy's chair at Parliament. For purpose of elections, we belong to the district of Hasbaya County and the County of Marj-Ayun, who combine to send to Parliament four deputies: two Shiites, one Moslem Sunni and one Orthodox. The village had two Orthodox candidates. The winner rewarded his supporters by obtaining permits to plant tobacco in Kfeir's land! None did it! Instead, they rented their permits to some planters down south in Jabel Ammil, simply because they did not know how to plant and take care of a tobacco plantation. The asphalted road and the automobile have dramatically and drastically

revolutionized the life, the dormant, home sweet home life of the people of Lubber land! The old, slow ways of animal travel and transportation were pushed off the road along with their beasts of burden, establishing themselves permanently in the life of the people. There is no automobile industry in the world without an agent in Lebanon, save those boycotted by the Palestinian Boycott Office, such as Ford and Jeep.

The small Caterpillar tractor is gradually taking the place of the team of oxen and the plows that anti-dated Noah's Ark! The fantastic rise of labor wages in big cities and oil-rich Arab States to meet the extraordinary demand for house construction or passionate enthusiasm for education, the indispensable need in the private and public sectors to absorb tens of thousands of educated young men and young women, the voluntary service in the army with its high salary and almost no risk at all plus pension and family allowances, medical care, the dire need for likewise number of school teachers with the same facilities and prerogatives, plus work with the numerous foreign companies, diplomatic corps and numerous other establishments offering work opportunities have all and so suddenly, worked hand-in-hand to turn our old means of living and sources of income topsy-turvy and for better and not worse. But this war which has been raging for the past 12 years in Lebanon has shot the country and everything on to pieces!

In the following discussion, I shall dwell on the various sources of income of the village as a whole as they exist today (1987), not accurately but approximately as I was able to gather them. As the Koran said, "No bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another."

Currently, olive oil is our chief agricultural product as almost all our suitable lands have been planted with olive trees. In addition, vast steep areas have been terraced and planted with olive trees. The annual income is nearly five million Lebanese pounds. Wheat and other grains bring another one million Lebanese pounds, while the four thousand heads of goats and cows and sheep give over a million. With the salaries of the army, police force and gendarmerie, more millions are added. The Ministry of Education employs over sixty teachers and others whose total salaries run over two million. There are other sources of income but of minor nature such as the

rent of the school buildings of the Orthodox Community, the wages paid to the Post Officials and others.

In connection with donations coming from abroad to needy families and relatives here, the nut is a hard one to crack, because this is a strictly private affair and it needs a nut cracker which we do not have; but we can roughly estimate it at around one hundred thousand Lebanese pounds. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Kfeirian immigrants in Brazil are now as active as their brothers were at the turn of this century. They send money generously and come here with their families and spend lavishly, all in the almighty U.S. dollar!

Not very long ago, a substantial source of income was added to other village sources. It was the honey bee industry, established here by my late father, on semi-scientific ways. This business was taken up by the people and tended very scientifically producing a fairly good annual income in the millions.

The foregoing details cover practically almost all the sources of income, except one I only casually mentioned: it is the money coming from Saudi Arabia and the oil-rich Arab states, which on its part, is in the millions.

10

SOCIAL LIFE AND OUTDOORS

As long as we are touching on all the deep veins of our life at Kfeir, may I, with the reader's permission, treat some aspects of the social life and outdoors only in the light vein.

Social Life

It is regrettable to say that social life and social activities at the village are almost nil now. They were livelier in the past. Although people still visit each other and gossip but occasionally and formally and not in the old free, happy-go-lucky, off-hand manner with its simplicity, congeniality and charm. The people seldom gather together at night to drink, sing, dance and make merry in their house. Radio and television keep the people confined to their homes. The night-long carouses and bacchanalian parties of our fathers who drank Arak by the demi-johns do not exist anymore because there are no longer grapes from which to manufacture Arak. To buy Arak from the shop is rather expensive and usually it is an inferior product. Scotch whiskey and European wines are more expensive and each Kfeirian is inclined to drink at home without sharing.

Neither the young men nor the young women go outing in the village in spring and summer as was the habit of the past. Obviously, the Second World War put an end to these social activities and changed some of our good old customs and traditions and traits and that deep sense of the communal and neighborly love into a rugged and selfish individualism.

The only occasion in which we can see people sing and dance is at a wedding. Here we, sometimes, hear the music of the mijwiz (reed flute) and naye (flute) and the tom tom of the "dirbaki" (muffled

drum). The dabke (dance) is still being performed as of old in its common step, as for the other steps of the "lame" and "crazy" steps, they do not know now.

The famous "Hida" (war songs) were sung formerly on horseback and sometimes by foot sluggers. As the caparisoned thoroughbred aristocratic Arabian horse has disappeared from the village with its finest of trappings, the gang of pedestrians accompanying the bride sing it on the occasion. With the vanishing of the horse, chivalry has also disappeared. Every long once in a while we hear the Hida only when people go to fetch the bride to her wedding ceremony at the church or to her future house. Gone are the days when the bride used to go to church mounted on a milk-white mare decked in the finest of trappings with a white cloak over her equally white bridal dress and a white parasol over her head. Now, the couple go to church hand-in-hand and then back home, rain or shine, in or not in apple blossom time, he in his dark somber suit and she in her white attire. European fashion!

These changes have reached the children also, who have discarded the old traditional games which had come down to them from time immemorial. The various games of knuckle bones have completely disappeared. The game of hide-and-seek, Dahwi (maybe the mother of polo), "Hajuj" (maybe the mother of baseball), and many other children's games and pastimes have all disappeared and became a folklore and legends of the past. But children must play and run and now they play volleyball and sometimes football when they can find a suitable lot. With the vanishing of the horse, the horseracing also vanished but it is being carried out in cities, such as Beirut, only for gambling purposes.

It is very regrettable to say that gambling with all its headaches and vices has invaded the communities, small and large, and at an accelerating tempo, creating the inevitable miseries and wretchedness to the players themselves and their families. Unfortunately, Kfeir has become a center of the menace!

Outdoors

Ever since my childhood, I have been a staunch adherent to the outdoors. This trait could be safely attributed to the fact that we

were born and raised in the arms of Mother Nature where we and the mountains, the forests, the moon, the stars and birds are close neighbors. In the following short discussion, I shall speak about birds, animals and hunting.

At the turn of this century, our land was very rich with birds and fauna. In the past, when the muzzle-loading shotguns were the style, there were four or five men in the village who could boast having a single or double-barrel gun. Some of them were hunters, others possessed the weapon for the sheer pride to have one. Whatever they killed in those days did not endanger the games of birds and animals very much; therefore, we had almost all kinds of birds, native and migratory, from the eagle down to the house wren and warbler. In the fauna kingdom, we had them from the big bear down to the small rabbit and squirrel.

Following World War I, the breakdown and automatic shotguns began to come to our markets. They were, these weapons, easy to handle and quick in action. The people began to buy them and the government began, in its turn, to issue permits to own them and to allow hunting with them. Not only did this type of hunting weapon invade our country, but high-powered and automatic rifles also, such as the British Enfield, the German Mauser, the French Label and now the American M16, the Russian Kalashnikov and many others.

Hunting in our area has increased tremendously and now one can see two or three shotguns in a home, from the 9-millimeter to the 12-gauge. The game on the other hand, has declined alarmingly. Our chief hunting game was the Chukar Partridge, better known as the red-legged. This kind of partridge family is to be found in Lebanon and Southern Syria. Some red partridges are to be found on the fringes of the Syrian Desert but are very scarce and with a limited number.

Ironic as it may sound, the number of partridges is now increasing in our area as it has been enhanced by the Palestinian-Israeli War that used to eddy up in our region. The partridges have come back. The accepted reason hereabout is that the Kfeirians, as well as the rest of the people in the area, have hesitated to go hunting lest the sunlight flashing off their gun barrels, might lead the low flying Israeli fighter bombers to mistake them for

Palestinian guerillas who inhabited the hills around us. So, a kind of involuntary conservation policy has resulted and the chukar have proliferated. After the Israeli invasion of our area and their subsequent withdrawal, as the campaign to them was a picnic at first, but the farther north they advanced the more they realized that Lebanon was to them a bed of feathers, the deeper they went the more they smothered!

There are some Lebanese laws regulating the hunting in the country, but no one cares to enforce and no one cares to obey. The quails used to come to us from the north on their way south for winter, but a few years back, the Turks sprayed their olive trees with insecticides while the quails were there and ate the olives and died by the millions. Very few of these birds are seen here now.

The animals which are rarely seen here are the rabbit, the fox, the hare, the wolf, the jackal, while the bear and the hyena have disappeared like the tiger which existed in the past. Occasionally some wild boars come to us from the Golan to the south when the exchange of gun fire is at its height between the Syrians and the Jews.

Of the birds, we still have the eagle, the vulture, the hawk, the dove, the wild pigeon, the lap wing, the bee eater, the woodpecker, the crow, the peregrine hawk and small birds, native and migratory of all kinds, such as ducks, sand grouse, wild geese and quails.

11

MASONRY AND HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

In the past, eight hundred years or more, the types of masonry in houses in Kfeir has changed several times, improving at each stage, always for the sake of more room, comfort and better living. When the first settlers came to the village, they were in a great hurry and naturally very poor and unable to build large, comfortable houses. They probably lived in tents or hastily constructed dwellings in a haphazardly way, using the nearby scattered stones from older eras in order to have a shelter as fast as they could. Some of these very ancient houses, which I call relics, are still intact at various sections of the village. For the roof, they used tree trunks from the nearby forests. These roofs were usually thatched and covered with earth and had a stone roller permanently placed on one corner of the roof. Inside, the house was usually composed of one single hall with an adjacent barn. Sometimes the barn and the house were under the same roof with a partition between. This partition had a large opening in it, allowing a man or a woman to pass through easily in order to feed the cattle at night, avoiding this task under rain in the winter months.

This was the first phase of their masonry and the second phase came later, possibly at the second or third generation, when family numbers increased, owned more land, became peacefully settled and somewhat richer.

Here we see that the stone is somewhat better dressed following an almost straight line in wall construction, yet the face of the stone remains in its natural quarried state. The roof was made of the same wooden materials as before but for the cornice they used instead of wood, earth stone slabs, protruding about a foot from the

main wall. The inside of the house was also a single large hall sans privacy yet with a partition to divide the winter quarter from that of the summer. The windows were small and scarce, one in each wall, at most.

About a hundred years or more later, the third phase of masonry began. Here the face of the stone is roughly dressed and the courses in building follow a straight line with larger windows and higher doors. The barn remained sometimes close to the dwelling or was in the first floor, as two-story buildings began to appear.

The fourth stage—an age of renaissance—came when the immigrants to the United States began to return and build houses. The last few houses to be built with American money in Kfeir belong to the author, Jacob Fakhoury and Mike Hage. Most of these immigrants sold their houses from the places they lived in, and so cut themselves from their roots. Those houses which were not sold and did not find someone to live in, crumbled and fell down in heaps.

The new houses were always two-story buildings and rarely one with a long corridor cutting it into two halves. The houses typically had two rooms in the southern section and two in the northern section. The doors were large with arches above. The rooms were used according to the family needs and size. The people used divans and bamboo chairs in their reception rooms. The windows were oblong and high and wide with glass shutters inside. They also introduced to these new houses the red pyramidal brick roofs, which gave the village a bright aspect. This style of building remained until reinforced concrete was introduced around 1930 and it is still the dominating factor in construction.

In the first three stages of construction, the people used for plastering, ordinary field earth of a yellow color and then painted it with colors they chose. In the fourth stage, they used lime and in the fifth they used cement.

At the present time, people build with either stones or cement blocks. The roof is always made of reinforced concrete, all of which is constructed according to plans made by some authorized civil or architectural engineer. Walls made of cement blocks are always plastered with cement and then painted. The floor is usually tiled

with mosaic slabs. These modern houses have all the modern conveniences and facilities of running water, electricity, modern kitchens, sleeping rooms, halls, living room, balconies, modern bathrooms and dining rooms and water closets. All these houses are now well-furnished thus making life more comfortable and worth living.

12

THE KFEIRIAN WOMAN

To those toiling, patient and noble women,
our mothers,
this chapter is dedicated.

A strong body, a balanced mind and good character are the three cardinal virtues with which the Kfeirian woman is endowed by the grace of God, which renders her noted throughout these regions. These traits with which she is gifted are the product of clean living, good climate, character and the fear of God, which she holds close to her warm heart and reasonable mind.

The Kfeirian man came to this area with the intention to settle down permanently, bringing along his wife and children. At that early period, some eight or ten hundred years ago, all the houses of the village were, as we previously stated, heaps upon heaps of crumbling stones and debris. The entire region was a dense forest and wilderness inhabited by wild beasts and snakes while the sky above was a racing ground for flying birds and vultures.



Figure 7 Aida Wakim

The newcomers had to have a shelter to live in. The land and the stones were there. There was also the willpower to live; therefore, the pioneers began to construct their humble houses from the stones of the destroyed ancient houses and palaces.

At that early stage of our ancestors' settlement at Kfeir, men and women worked very hard and hand-in-hand in clearing the land from rocks and trees and shrubberies and bushes in order to be able to plant or sow something so that they can eke a living out of the rocky mountain side. This backbreaking work was equally shared between man and woman, from sunrise till dusk.

In later years when the spinning and weaving industry was introduced to Kfeir, it was again the Kfeirian woman's task to shoulder more than fifty percent of the work. The man sat in his loom and wove while the endless preparations for such work were entirely carried out by the women, who did it with vivacity and unusual enthusiasm. It has been said, and the author bears witness to, that some women sat down in the looms and wove. The author knew a woman by the name of Oum Mansour Abou Nasser who wove the best finished cotton yarn and the cleanest in the village which made her famous, thus warranting Najib Bey Abssi, a Christian notable from Damascus, (living in Hasbaya and managing his bitumen mine near the Hasbani River source), to buy several white meters of her finished goods and sewed several suits of them. He proudly wore these suits and was followed by tens of men in the province. None ever gave her a medal or a blue ribbon, which she deserved. After the first World War, she went to Brazil and, perhaps, passed away there.

Later on, when the silk industry invaded the country and the cocoon breeding became profitable, the Kfeirians were among the first to breed the worms. Again, here it was the woman's task to bring the mulberry leaves from the field and slice them very fine and feed the worms, day and night. In tending to the vineyards, it was again, the woman's task to bring the grapes to the house. It was the woman's task to cut the grape bunches and heap them before they are carried off to the press. In wheat harvest, it was also her job to be in the field helping in the reaping even when the sun stood in the middle of the sky, like a ball of brass sending down its rays, like crackling spears, until the lizards gasped for air. With her head wrapped with a bandana, the Kfeirian woman helped scythe and worked side by side with her husband! As for her pregnancy and childbirth, this is another story.

Some hundred years ago or more, when the Kfeirian man found his way to the New World, he first went alone. After gathering some wealth, he returned home to bring back his wife and sometimes the children. The young unmarried men returned, got married, took their brides and returned to the Promised Lands!

Once in the New World and among alien peoples with her complete ignorance of the climate, language, customs, habits and surroundings, our Kfeirian woman suddenly and unexpectedly found herself at first completely lost. But her stay in the rear did not last long. Being intelligent to a marked degree, she soon acquired a sort of working knowledge of her environment and its language. Armed with her limited knowledge of English, she did not hesitate to help her husband in his store. Some women peddled goods in baskets, while others worked in factories.

In fact, one should raise his hat with pride to those pioneering Kfeirian women of that era who met the challenge, fought it and came out with flying colors. Be they in the rugged hills of West Virginia and its coal mines or the freezing plains of Ohio and Michigan, the industrial crowded cities of New England or the cotton raising areas south of the Mason-Dixon Line, women adapted.

While at home, the Kfeirian woman and girl have developed with time, taking advantages of all the opportunities presented to them. Their advance has been carried out along the educational lines. All the girls of age now go to school and none remains at home. They can now speak and write, besides Arabic, French and sometimes English. Many of them attend teachers' training schools and consequently become teachers employed by the Ministry of Education that sends them wherever they may be needed in the Republic. Even among the Druze, a good number of girls now attend colleges and universities. We already have two girls doing their post-graduate studies in medicine, one in the U.S.A., the other in Eastern Europe. They are Rima El-Khoury and Lyla Dhahir respectively.

Here below we give a set description of the Kfeirian woman.

Although we are racially considered of the white race yet we are not as white as the people of Northern Europe, but a good number of us are white of skin and fair of hair. The majority of us are

white-brown of color and dark or brunette of hair. Many of our boys and girls are born with milky-dark or brunette of hair. Many of our boys and girls are born with milky-white skin and honey-colored hair, but no sooner then they reach the age of ten or twelve then their skin turns into light-brown and their hair either brown or dark. Perhaps, the ultra-violet rays of our Middle Eastern sun are responsible for this phenomenal change.

The Kfeirian woman, as a rule, is neither very tall nor very short, but of medium structure and height. Her skin is light brown and sometimes white while her hair is either dark or brown, but seldom golden or red. While a girl, she is rather slender and beautiful of body, but once she is married and begins to give birth to children then she neglects herself and begins to gain weight. Physically, she is very strong and is able to adapt herself to any climate in the world. She can endure any hardship of life and faces trying conditions with patience and perseverance, doing her best to overcome them silently but boldly.

She is, above all, a loyal wife and good mother whose prime ambition is to raise good children. Being rather intelligent, she likes to read when she has a chance to and she likes music. She is neither talkative nor boisterous and her sentences are short and concise. In this context, she is rather laconic—a Spartan in a way. Her house is always clean and tidy and she tries to make her children likewise.

She goes to church occasionally, but does not miss a wedding or a funeral. She listens to the radio and likes to watch television. Her clothes are rather simple and usually she chooses the sober colors. She likes gold jewels and one seldom sees any of them without a bracelet or two or more on her wrist.

13

THE HIJRA

The Hijra or migration of the men and women of Kfeir, as well as every Christian village of Lebanon, has been a most destructive force to hit us. It left houses in ruins and land fallow. The contribution of the immigrants to their new countries is nothing to compare with the loss to the motherland. In the New World, they are lost in the humdrum of the teeming humanity. Every once in a long while one of them shines for a while and then all is dead and forgotten. Now, after a hundred years or so of this Hijra, the people there may be no better off than those who remained at home, neither financially nor culturally.

Compared with other migration to the United States of America, the Lebanese migration in general and that of the Kfeirians in particular are comparatively recent. The Lebanese migration is around one hundred and fifty years old, to believe what the late Reverend B.A. Silious Kheyrbawi says in his Arabic history of the United States of America. The Kfeirian migration is perhaps a hundred years old.

The first Kfeirian to set foot on the soil of the United States is not known. Had this question been asked fifty years ago, one was likely to obtain the correct answer, the man's name and date; but now all these old folks who went there or had known who went first, have passed away and we have to use approximate dates. I have heard it said that Abou Habib or Mansour Makarios, was the first Kfeirian to go to the United States.

Others claim that Hannah Mikhail, son of Isbir, was the first. Hannah had made two trips to the United States; on the first he took four men on his expense; on the second, five years after, he

took fourteen on his expense. Even his son Fouad does not know now the date of either one of these two trips. The old album at his house shows pictures of several men and women dressed in American costumes of those days which were taken at Fort Wayne, Indiana. Obviously these two trips of Hannah were made during the last quarter of the 19th Century. It has also been said that Assaf Saad[14], Habib and Tanious Amar were among the early emigrants from Kfeir.

Apparently these early Kfeirian emigrants did not remain long in the United States, at least some of them, only four or five years at the most since their prime objective was to obtain as much money as they possibly could and then return home to improve their ancient living conditions. These improvements included, among other things, remodeling of the ancient one-room squat house, purchasing furniture, getting married if single and buying land. The married men among the early immigrants had to hurry back to their wives and children.

The Kfeirian migration to the United States can be well divided into three stages:

- the first stage covers the earliest pioneers from the start up until 1914, being the beginning of World War I, when travel between the Motherland and North America was stopped;
- the second stage started in 1919 or 1920 and lasted till the beginning of World War II in 1939 when again transportation between here and America came to a standstill;
- the third stage began in 1946 after the end of World War II when travel to the United States was again in motion and it is still ongoing, but at a reduced rate.

Some of these early Kfeirian pioneers endured many hardships: fatigue and sickness, hunger and thirst and homesickness, the result of living in a strange land and among strange people who spoke a strange language. The generations that followed them owe them appreciation and gratitude for the security, happiness, comfort, good reputation and prosperity they now enjoy. These pioneers had

[14] Assef Saad departed Kfeir in 1895 with a large group, perhaps 40 persons, mostly younger men. Assef returned to Kfeir in 1899.

established enviable futures for their posterity, the likes of which one rarely encounters in any other community.

Besides being hard working, the Kfeirians were, above all, law-abiding citizens. One never heard of a Kfeirian being a thief, a lawbreaker, or a gangster. No matter where they first lived, their life was an endless chain of toil, be it in the black forests of West Virginia, or the plains of Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska or Dakota. In Lebanon, these men were not merchants, but small landowners and laborers who tilled their land. Some of them were muleteers and others were weavers. Then in America, suddenly and unexpectedly, they found themselves peddlers, selling goods which they had never seen before and the names of which they did not know, even in their dreams. They did not know a word of English and even in Arabic, their own language, many of them were illiterate.

Some men who did not like to work as peddlers went to the city and became factory workers. The peddlers were called *Kashashi* and the singular is *Kashi* derived from the word *Kash*, which means two leather suitcases: one small and one large carried on the back of the peddlers by means of leather straps. The small case resting on the large one. Inside these cases, the peddler put clothes of all sorts, for men, women and children, in addition to small articles, the names of which he, most of the time, did not know. Soon, by rote, he began to learn the names of these articles and to say simple things in English: "good morning," "want to buy something," the prices of his goods, "I am hungry," and "I am thirsty."

Those who peddled on the plains soon bought horses and wagons and carried their business from farm to farm. Those in the West Virginia mountains, which had few roads then, carried heavy loads on their backs as they trudged up and down the hills. Patiently they carried on until they had a working knowledge of English and saved enough money to enable them to open stores. These were mostly fruit stores, pool rooms, restaurants and once in a long while, a dry goods store.

Here we have a "hijra" from the country to the city, which revolutionized the Kfeirian immigrant's life entirely. The store brought stability and settlement, which in their turn brought the house and the house had to have a woman. Some Kfeirian girls had

gone with their brothers and were married there. Many young men returned home, got married and rushed back to their work.

The early Kfeirians settled in West Virginia at Williamson, Welch, Bluefield, Princeton, Beckley, Logan, Charleston, Saint Albans, Huntington and Point Pleasant. In Ohio, the city of Toledo was called "the Mother of the Orphans," because it housed a very large colony of Kfeirians who worked in numerous factories. Some towns close to Toledo had some Kfeirians in them such as Napoleon and Cleveland. While in Michigan we had some in Milan and Blissfield. Some went to the plains of South Dakota.

In the second phase of the Hijra, from 1919 up till 1939, a new wave of Kfeirian immigrants came to the United States. These immigrants were all young men between twenty and thirty years old and of a somewhat higher educational standard than the members of the first wave. Most of them could speak, read and write Arabic and French and some English.

Arriving at the United States, these young men did not have to work as peddlers, but went directly to work in stores already opened by their parents or relatives and countrymen. The store owners were happy to have their compatriots work for them. They trusted and paid them less because they furnished them with room and board. The newcomers accepted this scheme of things for some time until they had saved enough cash to enable them to open stores.

During the depression, the newcomers barely made a living in their new stores. When World War II broke out, most of these young men became American citizens and were drafted into the army, selling their stores or leaving them in the hands of their relatives and sometimes, wives.

The period which followed the end of World War II marked our third stage. During the period the number of Kfeirians who went to the United States dwindled. Some of them were young men who had married American-born young women who had come to Lebanon and returned with husbands. Others were college students who went to the United States to pursue their higher studies, married American girls and remained there. Those of them who brought their wives here were divorced only a few months after their arrival.

The outstanding collective achievement of lasting worth which

was undertaken and implemented by the Kfeirians in the United States was the establishment of the Kfeirian Reunion Foundation, Inc. and its annual meeting. When I was in America, the project was only a whispering campaign, carried around by a very few spirited Kfeirians who were scattered here and there and everywhere. It was a saga in an embryo! Since I happened to be in the United States at that time and took part in bringing the reunion to light, I knew of its early development. Among those enthusiastic Kfeirians who honestly wanted to put the scheme across and felt it a social necessity of prime magnitude were, as I now recall:

- Williamson: Sol Stephen, Mike and Abraham Khawaja, Abraham Bassett and Joseph Cantees;
- Welch: Eli and Najla Bassett and Namey Rahal;
- Beckley: Mick, Nick and Assaf Rahal;
- Charleston: Ramiz Ramey, Kamil and Isbir Makhail;
- St. Albans: George Bassett;
- Huntington: Mary Tweel, Fred and Philip Bassett, Elias Abou Khair, Charlie George, Toufic Kassab and others;
- Toledo: Abdullah Abou Jamra, Faris Shaly, Abdullah Julien Khoury, George Saad and others;
- Napoleon, Ohio: Moses Bassett.

After many ups and downs, the idea finally fermented, and I think now that it was Huntington that took the initial move and sent out invitations to the first gathering, called Mahrajan. About three hundred attended. A Mahrajan committee was set up at that meeting. It must be remembered that at those early meetings it was the host city which paid all the expenses, which we felt was not fair—not fair to let two or three houses in Williamson pay all the expenses when the country had not yet recovered from the crash and depression. I attended one meeting in Beckley (1935) and the other in Williamson (1936).

The idea behind the meeting was to get together and discuss ways and means to help Kfeir and if there were any needy persons

of Kfeirian families in the United States to stretch forth a helping hand. Second, social contact between the younger generation, and if it led to marriage, so much the better.

I returned home in 1936, expecting to return to the United States in six months, but I did not, finding sufficient employment in Lebanon and Syria. After the war, Syria and Lebanon became independent countries and members of the United Nations. So, they sent delegations to the UN. It so happened that Faris El-Khoury headed the Syrian delegation to the UN and his brother, Faiz, was Syria's Ambassador to Washington. Both are Kfeirians; they attended one of the annual meetings of the Kfeirian Reunion and raised enough funds to cover the expenses of the electric and water projects at Kfeir. They also drew up the bylaws of the Reunion on the strength of which they were given a charter and legal permit to operate business with a president, board of directors and all the necessary officials and not that only but making the visitors pay for their expenses. And so, what was once a day dream became a reality.

14

KFEIR'S UPS AND DOWNS: 1975 - 1990

Kfeir's Downs

Kfeir reminds me of that imaginary bird, the "Phoenix,"[15] which after living 500 years, is burned and rises again from its own ashes, fresh and beautiful, an emblem of immortality.

During the past 15 years or so, Kfeir had its ups and downs. Its downs started before its ups when a petty Lebanese army officer went to Cairo and signed with the Palestinians, the so-called Cairo Agreement[16], the terms of which were never made public. However, it soon became well known that it gave the Palestinians all southern Lebanon—from Mount Hermon in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the West to freely use as their bases of operation against Israel.

Unfortunate as it was, Kfeir, with some other towns in the area, were chosen as bases by the Palestinians, against which the people were utterly helpless. Here they occupied ten empty houses in the western side of the town. Soon the entire southern Lebanon became the goal of the Israeli bombardments with raids from the air sometimes strafing at random the defenseless towns. Kfeir received a heavy share of destruction from these raids. A number

[15] The ancient Greeks and Egyptians described a mythical bird called the Phoenix, a magnificent creature that was a symbol of renewal and rebirth. According to legend, only one Phoenix lived at a time. Just before its time was up, the Phoenix built a nest and set itself on fire.

[16] The Cairo Agreement was an agreement reached on 2 November 1969 during talks between Yasser Arafat and the Lebanese army commander. Although the text of the agreement was never published, an unofficial text appeared in the Lebanese daily newspaper *An-Nahar* on 20 April 1970. The agreement established principles under which the presence and activities of Palestinian guerrillas in southeastern Lebanon would be tolerated. The agreement established the right of the Palestinian residents in Lebanon "to join the Palestinian revolution through armed struggle."

of our men were killed and wounded and many houses were blown up, Ten of the Palestinian bases were in the Christian Quarter and five of them were completely destroyed, not to be rebuilt.

This business of strike and return on both sides led the Israelis to send a huge army north on five fronts from the Hermon to the Mediterranean. This drove the Palestinians north above the Damascus-Beirut Road. Later, the Israelis returned to occupy most of Southern Lebanon, including Hasbaya, Kfeir's administrative center. This improvised line paralyzed our commercial and legal activities as Hasbaya is our county seat. Now it is easier for us to go to the United States than to Hasbaya! The Israelis created the Army of Southern Lebanon to maintain law and order, installing liaison officers at the various county seats.

Fifteen miles to the north there is the county of Rashaya where the Syrians occupy the area and the few towns between Rashaya and Hasbaya are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, so to speak.

Kfeir's Ups

Our ups began when—for no apparent reason—the people of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, and other areas in the country began suddenly and unexpectedly jumping at each other's throats like wild beasts, consequently destroying their beautiful city and a good number of their villages. In such a chaotic state, people rushed out of the battle zones to seek refuge in placid places. As there are some 55 Kfeirian families living in Beirut, they naturally rushed back home where we live in peace and harmony with our Druze neighbors. They and their children created a new look to the sleepy town. With their tanned bodies, flowing hair, abbreviated skirts and pants, they move around the town like a host of golden daffodils. Our church, which in the days of yore was a citadel, barely held the people on Sundays, many had to stand outside near the door to partake of the mass.

Up until the end of the last World War, money that came from the New World, mostly from the United States, financed the building sector in town. Now little money comes from the New World, save once in a blue moon. But Allah is All Merciful; he does not shut a

door until he opens another. Huge sums now pour in from the oil-rich Arabian Gulf States where, many of our common and skilled laborers are receiving high wages which they have never seen, not even in their dreams.

Besides those sources of income, we have some sixty young men in the Lebanese Army who receive high wages allowing them to build homes here. Add over 50 teachers at local schools who also draw high salaries.

Kfeir is now spreading north and east but not south and west. Here the houses are popping up like mushrooms with roads, electricity and running water. Our streets are either cemented or asphalted.

Our schools are the best in the region with around four hundred students and 45 teachers, teaching Arabic and French only up to college entrance – baccalaureate. In the higher classes, students come to us, boys and girls, from the nearby villages such as Ain Atta, Khalwat, Marj-Zihour (previously Dnieba), Memiss and other places. The school buildings are not large enough to hold all the students at once and so the student body is divided into two sections: one comes before noon and the other in the afternoon. The erecting of new school buildings is now under consideration as our present school is church property. The government pays the rent thereof.

Now we have a fairly good network of agricultural roads in the various directions around the town, except for the eastern mountainous and rocky side where the land in general is not suitable for farming, only for grazing.

Before the last *coup d'état* took place, Col. Issam Abou Jamra[17], from Kfeir, was planning to make Kfeir a paradise on earth when he held several ministerial portfolios. However, a counter coup sent the prime minister, Col. Issam and the rest of the cabinet members seeking refuge at the French. Among his first projects here was to be the setting up an electronic telephone system, by which one can talk with any part of the world at the push of a button. The machines thereof were to be installed in their new buildings: one near the school, the other atop the mountain overlooking the town.

[17] General Issam Abu Jamra of Kfeir served as minister of telecommunications and minister of economy from 22 April 1988 to 25 November 1989. Abu Jamra was born 6 February 1937 into a Greek Orthodox family.

One can hardly guess when these projects will be in motion.

Our mayor as well as our mukhtar and a good number of council members have passed away in the past 20 years, during which time no election has taken place The town limps onward with the remaining few who live.

We have a girls' society active in civic and social affairs and also a class teaching women and girls home economics, cooking and sewing and the other skills a housewife may need in her home.

Sadly, as it may sound, gambling with all its vices have invaded the town and gamblers from far and near come here to play.

15

THE BATTLE ZONE

Arreph El-Khoury's article, was published in the July 25, 1974 edition of "The Daily Star," Beirut

Before describing the events that have taken place during the past five years in Southern Lebanon, it is first necessary to describe the physical setting of this god-forsaken area known as Wadi el-Tayme.

Wadi el-Tayme, consisting of the counties of Hasbaya and Rashaya, is situated directly west of the foot of Mount Hermon where until recently, severe artillery and rocket barrages, as well as air duels were taking place between the Syrian and the Israeli armies to control the lofty summits of the once sacred mountain.

The terrain of Wadi el-Tayme—from the Beirut-Damascus Road in the north to the Houla plains in the south—is one comprising a rugged, stony cluster of rolling hills, towering mountains with deep valleys and high cliffs, as well as a rough and scraggy land covered primarily with thick forests of oak, elm, turpentine and huge brackens of pine trees. Although the land of Hasbaya is just as rough as that of Rashaya, it is richer in olive groves and enjoys the historical prerogative of having in its territory one of the main sources of the Jordan River; the Hasbani River.

Vast areas of fertile land are irrigated around the Hasbani River banks, for summer crops of fruits and vegetables.

Following the mysterious "Cairo Agreement" (the contents of which, and even the names of those who signed it, have never been made public) the region became the armed camps of the Palestinian commandos. No sooner had they come to the area then the Israeli

planes began regular reconnaissance flights overhead.

Once, they flew low enough to drop pamphlets telling the people to expel the commandos from their midst or else they would be subjected to bombing, as if the commandos came on the invitation of the people!

Almost all organizations complied with the peoples' request to leave the villages, although some remained and later on, they were strafed and bombed.

Not long afterward, the Israelis made true their threats and began land and serial bombardments of Hasbaya villages. Their savage bombardments of the villages close to the border began with Choubaa, Hiberiya, Kafre Chouba, Rashaya el-Foukhar, Khreiby only to later include the villages of Ain Kinya, Shweiya, Hasbaya, Koukaba, Fardis, Ain Jarfa, Memiss, Kfeir and even Ayn Atta in the county of Rashaya to the north. Hasbaya was the worst hit by bombing raids. Several houses were demolished and/or damaged and scores of people were either killed or wounded when they hit the residential quarters and market places. The losses, in all these villages and towns, as well as in forests, fields and olive groves were heavier than the economy of this hilly country could afford—this hilly country whose inhabitants have to eke a living out of the mountain side.

After opening roads in these areas, the Israeli troops carried out land invasions on several occasions, once reaching as far as the Shakaa Bridge on the Hasbabi River, only a short distance to the southeast of the ancient Souk el-Khan, the weekly market place. These brutal raids began almost nine years ago and up till now they are still being carried out time and again to no possible value.

In order to appease the dissatisfied and injured people throughout Southern Lebanon who were caught helplessly in the midst of this knotty situation, the Lebanese Government created what has been referred to as "The Council of the South." The purpose and function of this body is to compensate people for their losses in life and property by funds allotted from the national treasury. Claims for such losses and damages are first presented to the Kiamakam, the district officer, who signs and turns them over to the gendarmes for investigation. Then, they are dispatched to the Council for an

estimate in cost and payment. Some officers have made fortunes out of this procedure. In some cases, the Council has acted quickly, in others its work was slow. However, in the end it paid well to those who actually suffered losses.

With the Israeli presence on the peaks of Mount Hermon following the October 1974 War and until only a few weeks ago when a disengagement was reached between Syria and Israel, the area of Wadi al-Taym became the virtual battlefield between Syrian and Israeli fighting units.

The Syrian artillery in a regular clock-wise fashion, pounded Israeli positions and transportation on the peaks of Hermon, which they had occupied after opening a road on its crests. From the Lebanese side, we were able to see with the naked eye, Israeli vehicles going up and down those lofty peaks with shells bursting all around them, sometimes in their midst, and leaving in their wake clouds in clouds of black smoke and dust. These barrages continued day and night. It was rather difficult for those Syrian boys behind their guns and rockets to hit their objectives on the summits where the road passes. Therefore hundreds, perhaps thousands, of shells burst on the slopes below the peaks and down in the valleys.

The bright snow turned into a black carpet for the first time in the long history of the sacred mountain. It is here the ancients had offered sacrifices to Baal Hermon and worshipped at the crest of the mountain, known now as Qasir Shibib. Here, the ruins of the temple still stand and here The United Nations Truce Forces camp.

The aerial dogfights between the Syrian and the Israeli air forces during these eighty or so days were very interesting and fascinating to watch when you know that you are not going to be bombed or strafed. Primarily, it was Israeli planes that attacked Syrian positions on the mountain. They appeared from the south, flying low and roaring like mad devils, dropping long strings of silvery threads resembling the stencil behind them, hoping to scramble radar surveillance, but these methods did not apparently prove as effective as they were intended to be. No sooner had the Israelis, protected by flying below the summits of the high mountains, become visible to the Syrians behind their rockets and anti-air guns then a hail of a barrage cut loose and the same rockets

could be seen trailing the fleeing Israeli planes at a fantastic speed. Then a large ball of crimson fire would be seen close to the plane. Many of these attacking planes would be seen returning home trailing long, thick lines of sooty smoke behind them. Some of these planes dropped like tons of lead on the Lebanese territory. Others managed to reach Israeli as far as we could see. One of these planes fell in the town of Khiam in Marj-Ayoun area and destroyed two houses, killing several persons. The herders who graze their goats in the land on the western slopes of Mount Hermon said that there were four planes sunk deep in the ground with swarms of flies and gnats hovering around them, while the slopes are dotted with the wreckage of airplanes and vehicles.

Every time the Palestinians make a major or minor raid on the Israeli border villages or inside Israel, the Israelis accelerate their merciless bombardments of the region, either by planes or long-range artillery from points south and southeast. Many villages were hit badly, lives were lost and houses and property were destroyed and damaged. In order to have a clear idea about this endless war in Southern Lebanon between the Israelis and the Palestinians and how the Israeli behave in it, one has to read "The Old Testament" as there is no difference between the mentality of the ancient Jews and the modern Israelis in their treatment of enemies.

Later on, the Israelis came up north in five or six columns and almost reached the Damascus-Beirut Road, but the campaign in Lebanon seemed a bed of feathers to them and the deeper they went the more they smothered. Finally, they folded their tents and returned close to their original borders.

16

THE FUTURE OF KFEIR

We are not prophets to tell the future, and for all we may know at present [1982], squadrons of Israeli bombers may sweep down upon our village and turn Kfeir into ashes, or a battery of long-range guns may do the same, claiming that the presence of Palestinian fighters is a menace to their life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

However, judging by many factors, one can safely assert that the future of Kfeir is promising, especially when we consider the great number of our young people in colleges and universities here and abroad. Many of them also study in technical schools and at teacher training centers. The population is increasing rapidly and migration to the New World, Africa and Australia is no more the driving force of the younger generation, because the cry now is “Go East, Young Man, as far as Muscat and Oman!”

Our population is increasing rapidly and by virtue of the excellent living conditions and equally excellent medical care the government is affording the people. Before the Israeli invasion we had an up-to-date clinic in the village set up by the PLO and manned by Norwegian doctors and nurses, who are stationed here for three months before being substituted by another team from the same country. With their politeness and highly civilized manners, not to mention their milky white skin, golden hair, deep blue eyes and graceful height, they give the village a glamorous and delicate hue.

Child death is almost nil now and we seldom hear of it. The village is teaming with children—boys and girls who are healthy, well-clothed and well-fed. Because of the disturbances in the whole of the country, teachers from the village are now teaching at the

local schools, which has some five hundred students. Before the Israeli invasion, all the students of the two higher baccalaureate classes had to go to Hasbaya for their higher studies. When the Israelis drew a line north of Hasbaya, they forbade persons from the northern villages to enter Hasbaya in a direct route. It is possible to reach Hasbaya now only by detouring by the Hasbani river road, where a person is subjected to several check points where they may be kept one hour before being released. In effect, this kept students from Khalwat, Kfeir, Memiss, Ain Atta and other villages from attending higher school, except that when these classes were brought to Kfeir. The principal of the school is from the neighboring village of Khalwat. The large number of students necessitated that the student body be divided into two groups, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

Some years ago, Kfeir was chosen as the ideal center for a new school, a project that called for the construction of two large buildings. The buildings were constructed in 2001 and were located in the Baydar al Ramel forest.

Everything that the village produces now finds a good market, even the figs which were previously neglected are in great demand. Kfeir is the village of olive oil and it is our greatest product.

Land development and the building of homes is rising as the value of land is rising. Currently, there are some forty new houses under constructions and most of the homes are financed by money coming from the oil rich Arab countries.

Let us hope that Kfeir will soon regain its former status as "The Flower of Wadi el-Taym."

BOOK II

The El-Khoury Family

17

FARIS BEY EL-KHOURY (1877-1962)

"The Knight of the Arabs" to some, "The Father of His Country" to others and to some, "The Owner of the Largest Head in the Arab World." But to those who knew him at close range, and internationally, he was the leading Arab statesman of all times.

Faris El-Khoury was the oldest son of Yacoub and Hamdi Fakhoury. He was born in Kfeir in the year 1877. His primary education was at the village school, conducted by the local priest who had a bastinado hung at the wall and woe to the student who was lazy or mischievous! His punishment was a sole-slashing cudgeling. Faris used to say proudly that he was the only student to graduate without being bastinadoed. When the priest happened to be away from school or working on his land, he used to appoint Faris as the teacher, a practice that carried Faris in later years to the highest educational institutions in the country.



Figure 8
Faris Bey El-Khoury

When the priest had taught Faris all that he knew, Faris left school. His father, Yacoub, was somewhat pleased with this outcome, hoping that Faris would eventually help him to raise his large family; but Hamdi, Faris' mother had a different point of view and a different direction. Seeing that her son was so brilliant and anxious to pursue his studies, she thought that he should be given a chance to carry on at a higher school. When Faris was less than ten years old, he would be asked to multiply a large number, such as 60 x 365 x 24 being the hours of a man 60 years old.

Faris would easily say 325,600 hours.

One late summer day, Hamdi, God rest her soul, heard that the "Khawajat"—a title of respect given to the European missionaries, were at Hasbaya registering students for their school in Sidon. Her golden opportunity to educate Faris had come, especially when she thought that these Khawajat belonged to the same church Faris belonged to.

Early on the following morning she went to the vineyard, picked a basket full of the finest grapes and returned home. She dressed Faris in his best clothes, and carrying the basket of grapes went straight to Hasbaya, a distance of almost ten miles, where she sought the preacher's house and inquired about the missionaries, to be told, to her disappointment, that they had already gone to Jdeidat Marj-Ayoun. To Marj-Ayoun they went, a distance of more than fifteen miles, carrying their basket of grapes. Here at Jdeidt, they were told to their fiasco again, that the missionaries had already gone to Deir-Mimass, and at their heels they went, another fifteen miles. A person is barely able to walk five miles per hour; but our heros were not only walking but also running!

Finally at Deir-Mimass, they met the missionaries who were very pleased to learn that Faris was a Protestant of their sect. After asking Faris a few questions, they were pleased to tell him that he was already accepted at their school. What they liked about this country boy was his intelligence, boldness, golden hair, rosy-white complexion, lustrous blue eyes and penetrating looks, and the large head on that frail body. He was told to return home before darkness and to come to Sidon at a certain date, at the end of that summer with his clothes and bed.

Only a few months after his arrival in Sidon, Faris sent back home a poem in colloquial Arabic, the first two lines of which I now remember, which reads as follows:

I composed excellent poetry,
With heart yearning for home,
I came seeking knowledge,
to find that learning is man's best gift.

Faris remained at Gerard Institutes in Sidon until he graduated, obtaining high honors. From Sidon he went to Beirut to pursue his studies at the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), now the American University of Beirut; but here, instead of taking him in, the missionaries sent him to Zahle to teach at their school there. This took place in 1890. In Zahle a man by the name of Mimassi tried to convince Faris to go with him to the United States of America as a partner in business on account of his excellent English, but he preferred to return to the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut to pursue his studies. Again, the missionaries, instead of enrolling him at their college, sent him to Majdal Shamiss in Syria to teach at their school there. This took place in 1892 and on the following year, the missionaries sent him to teach at their school in Sidon, but in 1894, he returned to the SPC to pursue his studies there. His father died in that year and in 1897 he graduated from the SPC and was appointed to teach at Mouallaka near Zahle in the Bekaa Valley. At the end of that year, he was appointed to teach Arabic and mathematics at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.

During the year 1899, Yacoub Sarruf, the owner of the then famous Arabic monthly magazine "Al-Mouktataf" published in Cairo, Egypt, asked him to be the editor-in-chief of that magazine at a monthly salary of fifteen gold pounds. He did not consider the offer!

One wonders how and why Faris left the Syrian Protestant College, his Alma Mater, and its occidental atmosphere and to whose denomination he belonged, to accept a position as head of the Orthodox Educational Center in Damascus in 1904? The story here is worthy of note.

His coming to Damascus was incidental, which entirely changed his career. It was reported that he was getting ready to immigrate to Brazil when suddenly and unexpectedly, like a stroke of fate, he was informed that one of his cousins, along with his brother Ayoub, had kidnapped an Orthodox girl from their village after beating her mother harshly and consequently were arrested and taken to Damascus and lodged in jail there pending trial.

Faris lost no time but rushed to Damascus to settle the knotty problem peacefully at the Orthodox Patriarchate there. Seeing how brilliant and highly cultured Faris was, the Patriarch duly

appointed him head of their Orthodox schools in Damascus. Here the pay was good and, in his far-sightedness, Faris saw that his future was in this city, the capital of greater Syria; therefore, he began to study law along with his work at the schools. It took him only one year to obtain his certificate to practice law.

While he practiced law, he worked as an interpreter to the British Consulate in Damascus and also studied Turkish and French, mastering both languages to a marked degree.

During his work as a lawyer, he became acquainted with another lawyer from the Holiest of Lands by the name of Ameen Zaidan who, too, was working in Damascus. Soon he and Zaidan became partners. It was this partnership that brought about his marriage to Asma Eid, a Palestinian niece of Zaidan.

During this time there was no parliament in the divine right Sultanate of Turkey. After many disturbances and minor uprisings, the Turkish Sultan, Abdul Hamid, was deposed and a new Sultan by the name of Mohammad Rashad mounted the throne. In 1912 a Parliament was elected for the first time in Turkey.

Faris El-Khoury won election as a deputy from Damascus against very strong opposition. In 1914 World War I broke out and Turkey sided with Germany, to its utter misfortune and consequent disintegration, losing all its outlying positions outside Anatolia. In 1915, Faris El-Khoury, along with tens of Arab notables and leaders were accused of being unloyal to the Turkish Sultan and his regime and were imprisoned at Khan el-Pasha in Damascus awaiting trial by court martial, after severe tortures. It was several months of this imprisonment before they were finally brought to trial. None of them were declared guilty, but were dismissed free of charges! Once free, Faris El-Khoury returned to Istanbul to pursue his parliamentary work. During this period, he was promoted from deputy to a senator in the newly formed Senate.

He held this office until the Ottoman Empire ended in Syria and the other Arab States, including Yemen, Hijaz, Palestine, Iraq, Tripoli and other places.

For history's sake, we relate here what was said at that time, which may cast a light on our subject, which went to say that Hussain, the Sheriff of the Holy City of Mecca had declared the famous Arab

Revolt against Turkey by firing the first bullet from the balcony of his palace in Mecca.[18] In the first few days of the attacks, the Arab irregulars captured over a thousand Turkish soldiers in Hijaz. Momentarily, Hussain officially declared that from now on he would hang ten Turks against each Arab hung by the Turkish authorities, throughout the Arab world. This is, perhaps, the reason why none of Khan el-Pasha's prisoners were hung.

Faris El-Khoury returned to Damascus from Istanbul in 1917 and in 1918 the First World War came to an end with the Anglo-Arab forces entering Damascus triumphantly, under the leadership of General Allenby on the British side and the Sheriff Faisal, son of Hussein, as the Arab counterpart. Later on, Faisal was crowned King of Syria, to be driven out of it by the French, under the pretense of a mandate granted to France by the League of Nations. Iraq took Faisal in and crowned him its king, to have, years later, his entire family massacred by the same people!

No sooner had the Turks withdrawn from Damascus than Faris El-Khoury and a few leaders of Damascus met at the grand Sarrai and formed the first democratic, free, non-religious and independent Syrian government since the rise of Islam. Its first move was going that night to the citadel to free all the prisoners. A few days later, the Allied Forces entered the City and Sheriff Faisal was declared head of the Syrian State.

It was not long afterwards when this non-religious government was dissolved and a government of councilors was formed. Faris El-Khoury became a member of this government of counselors, a position that he held from November 1918 till March 1920, when he became a Minister of Finance. This new Ministry was headed by Riza el-Rikabi, and it was the Ministry of Hashen Attassi in which Faris El-Khoury was the Minister of Finance. This ministry took office on March 3 and remained in office till July 25, 1920, being the date of the French occupation of Syria, thus putting an end to the long-cherished dreams of Syrian independence. It began for Syria a long and costly struggle to regain its freedom.

After the French occupation of Syria, Faris El-Khoury returned to his law practice and in 1921 he was elected head of the Syrian

[18] T. E. Lawrence describes this event in his book, *The Revolt in the Desert.*

Parliament. In 1922 he was appointed member of the Syrian Union Council and also professor of law at the Law College of the Syrian University.

The year of 1925 witnessed the greatest upheaval in the history of Syria; it marked the great Syrian revolt against the French Mandate. Sultan Pasha Attrash led the revolt from his Jabel Druze headquarters and it spread to cover Houran, Wadi al-Taym, Hasbaya, Rashaya, Marj-Ayoun, Damascus and points north and west as far as the Mediterranean Sea and Aleppo. The revolt lasted two solid years and was not subdued until France put some one hundred and twenty-five thousand soldiers on the field in Syria. They were backed by all the modern weapons it could send plus tens of planes, to fight up and down the Syrian hills and plains.

No sooner had the revolution broken out than Faris El-Khoury and a group of Syrian leaders were duly arrested and exiled to the Island of Arwad in the Mediterranean Sea, facing the Syrian Coast and lodged in an underground solitary confinement in its citadel built by the Crusaders.

After his return from exile, however, Faris El-Khoury was appointed Minister of Education in the Ministry of Ahmad Nami, which lived from April 26, 1926 to June 12, 1926. Upon the resignation of this Cabinet, Faris El-Khoury was again exiled, now to the city of Hasaka in the Jazira Province, situated right in the heart of the smoldering Syrian Desert, where the heat may reach in summer some 115°F. In their unhealthy and stuffy dungeon, the exiled almost smothered to death. When their health deteriorated alarmingly the French authorities were forced to transfer them to a better climate; so, they were brought to Douma in the mountains of Lebanon, where they remained in that invigorating climate till 1928.

On their way to Douma they were transferred by train for almost all the journey. They were guarded by a group of French soldiers headed by a giant of a man with a large beard and a terrific moustache reaching to his ears, while the beard went down almost to his sash. Whenever Faris Bey had something to say to this soldier, he used to address him as "My General" in French. The French soldier would pull up his chest, twist his moustaches, strike his beard arrogantly and smile beatifically through half-

closed eyelids. This process went on for sometime until one of the exiled told Faris Bey that this soldier was only a sergeant and not a general. Oomph! berated Faris Bey and went on saying: "All this beard and those moustaches on a sergeant," and added, "I shall continue to call him general till the end of this trip; because he may go to France and then return to us as a high commissioner!"

Returning to Damascus from banishment, Faris Bey was forbidden to enter the parliamentary election or to be on the constitutional committee that was supposed to draw up a new constitution for the country, on the ground that he was a Protestant, coming from a sect, which does not have the required number of voters as stipulated by the law. It was the minority of the minorities!

At this period an attempt was made on his life and it almost so cowardly accomplished its objective, but God is on High!

Faris Bey was accustomed to spend the summer weekends at his house in Bloudan, one of the Syrian summer resorts west of Damascus at an elevation of 1400 meters above sea level.

Going to Bloudan one afternoon, a French military vehicle traveling at a terrific speed passed him by, then stopped and waited until Faris Bey's car passed. He then rushed to his steering wheel and drove at a high speed to catch up to Faris Bey's car, hitting it and sending it tumbling into the ditch at the right side of the road. The French soldier did not stop to see what had happened but continued on his way.

Soon several cars parked around him and their occupants rushed to the rescue, pulling Faris Bey and his driver out of the wrecked car and rushing them to hospital in Damascus. Faris Bey suffered a deep cut on his nose, the scar of which accompanied him all his life. His baby finger of his left hand was broken and remained crooked. His chest received a heavy blow, which made breathing rather difficult for the first few days, but by and by he began to improve. About a week later or more he left the hospital. His driver suffered from a long cut on his skull, which required several stitches; outside that no serious injury was inflicted on them.

In 1936, France finally agreed to draw up a treaty with the Syrians and Faris Bey was chosen a member of the delegation that

went to France to negotiate.

Previous to these developments and as early as 1928, the Syrian Constitution was enacted. Faris Bey's brother, Faiz, the leading jurist and the most dashing and colorful statesman east of Suez, was elected a member of the constitutional committee. No sooner had this committee met and started its work than the time-honored conflict between Islam and Christianity stood up challenging. It was now on the context of the constitution's preamble, after a long and peaceful argument. It was between Faiz El-Khoury, the Christian and his Moslem colleague, Fawzi el-Ghazi. Both men were born in Lebanon—the irony of it!

The disagreement came over the wording of the preamble. Fawzi El-Ghazi the Moslem wanted it to read as follows: "Syria is an independent free sovereign state whose religion is Islam." This wording creates two classes of citizens: first it gives the right to the Moslems to be the only officials in the government; second it prohibits all the non-Moslem elements in the country from holding office in the government. To this wording Faiz El-Khoury, the Christian, objected strongly and rejected it "in toto." Unable to agree on the preamble, its question was put aside and the committee proceeded with the articles. Finally, the constitution was completed, yet the preamble remained. It was Fawzi El-Ghazi who suggested that the matter be taken up to Faris Bey El-Khoury for his decision. Faiz El-Khoury agreed and they went up to him.

After hearing their sides of the problem, he smiled and said: "Write ya Fawzi. Syria is an independent free, democratic and sovereign state, the religion of its president is Islam!" Both sides agreed to this wording and leaving his audience satisfied.

It must be remembered that at that time there was a strong undercurrent in the Syrian populace's opinion to the effect that Faris El-Khoury should be the future president, but Fawzi El-Ghazi and other Moslem leaders who aspired to the chair found it a golden opportunity to keep all the Christians away from national officialdom, as well as the presidency! They knew it would prevent the Christian mothers in Syria, when looking down at their babies in their cots, to think that this boy may someday become the president of his country, as the case in any modern country.

Faris Bey El-Khoury knew all these and many more, he who had spent all his life fighting bravely against terrific odds, and he with his proverbial self-denial, who had worked the preamble of the constitution as he did, giving it to the Moslem, at least the presidency, knowing well that a strong speaker of the house or a prime minister can run the affairs of the state to the benefit of all concerned.

To go back to the Franco-Syrian treaty and its relative negotiations in Paris. The Syrian side was composed of Hashim Attassi, Faris El-Khoury, Mustapha Shihabi, Col. Ahmad Laham, Jamil Mardam, Edmond Rabat and others, including Riad Solh of Lebanon as an interpreter on account of his excellent French.

For six months, the Syrian delegation remained negotiating in Paris and finally it obtained a treaty as best as could be wrested from what was at the time, the strongest military power in the world.

Talking about their work with those highly efficient French delegates of civil and military experts, of statesmen and generals, Faris Bey said that every time there was an important matter to be discussed, the French side would bring in about ten or more experts on the subject under discussion, who would stand behind Baron Fino, the French Chief Delegate, and would not hesitate to whisper a word or two in his ear when the need arose. This used to go on smoothly as long as non-military matters were brought up for discussion, in which the Syrian side was on level ground with the French one. But when military matters were introduced, the nut was a hard one to crack, as Col. Laham was an old Turkish Army officer whose knowledge of military science goes back to the Janizary[19] Era!

"Whenever a military subject came up," he said once, "and I realized that we were no match to the French side with their military experts, I used to ask its postponement ten or fifteen days during which time I went to the book stores and bought as many books on the subject as I could find, and read them at leisure. Thus,

[19] The Janissary corps was established in the late fourteenth century. The Janissaries' first recruits were from the ranks of young Christian prisoners of war; they were converted to Islam, taught Turkish, and given a rigorous military training.

we were able to argue military topics on equal footing with the French experts, which led one of their high-ranking generals to ask me once where I had studied military science and in which army I had served. I smiled and told him I got my knowledge in that field from Hachette's Library!"

Besides his work as a professor of law at the College of Law of the Syrian University and also head of the Bar for many years, Faris Bey was responsible for the establishment of the modern Syrian industry. His first attempt along this line was his setting up of the Damascus Water Works.

The French authorities had given the concession to a French company. The project was to supply Damascus with drinking water from the Fijih Stream about twenty-five kilometers west of the city. The people of Damascus strongly objected and the French compromised by giving them twenty-four hours to form a company and its bylaws. Faris El-Khoury accepted the challenge and before the twenty-four hours were over, he had the bylaws written down, the company organized and the necessary funds raised.

His second industrial project was the establishment of the largest cement factory in Syria, at Doumar, at the outskirts of Damascus. He remained the President of the Board of Directors of both companies for a good number of years, until the Syrian Government nationalized the industries throughout Syria, an innovation that came to Syria from Eastern Europe with the leftist elements in the saddle, thus putting government in business. This is contrary to the established democratic forms of government.

Following the ratification of the treaty with France, Faris Bey was now elected to Parliament as a representative of all minorities in Damascus. He was duly elected Speaker of the House and later as President of the Chamber of Deputies. Time and again he was elected to the same office until 1944 when he was entrusted with forming the cabinet.

During all his political career, Faris Bey El-Khoury had to cope with a group of "Turkofied" elder Syrian politicians with backward mentalities, obsessed with the fanatical idea that the state exists for their benefit, simply because they came from such and such a family. It was mal-administration and greed, which brought about

ten coups in less than thirteen years! It was a well-known conception in Damascus that whenever Faris Bey El-Khoury came to form a cabinet, the treasury would be an area of the greatest attention. He then began his salvage work and in only a few months there would be several hundreds of millions of Syrian pounds as a surplus in the treasury coffers. Once he had saved a good round sum then his ministers, at the signal from the 'Sublime Gate[20]', would start resigning one after the other, thus forcing him to resign at the end, too! A few months later, he would be called on again to form a new cabinet and the people of Damascus numerously used to call him the "Sankari"—tinker!

From Oct. 1944 till Dec. 1946 Faris' time was divided between the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies and the Prime Ministry. In 1947 he was chosen to head the Syrian delegation to the United Nations conference in San Francisco. While there he was elected to the Syrian Parliament as well as its Speaker. He represented Syria at Lake Success and at the United Nations in New York City where he became the dean of the Arab Delegations to the United Nations and also president of the Security Council for one term.

In San Francisco, as well as New York City, Faris El-Khoury reached the apogee of his fame and appreciation, not only on Arab level but universally. He was rightly considered one of the leading leaders in the world at that time, nearly on the same level as Roosevelt, Churchill, de Gaulle, Nehru and others.

As an author Faris Bey wrote and published several volumes on financial laws, which were used as textbooks at the Law College of the Syrian University in Damascus. He also wrote a book of poetry and many of his poems were published in magazines and newspapers, most of which appeared in a thesis about his literary career by Dr. Nassim El-Khoury, one of his relatives, now vice president of the College of Literature in the Lebanese University.

Once when asked to write his memories, he smiled and said that if he were to do so, he had to be truthful, and that would eventually hurt some of his companions during their struggle for independence against the Turks, then against the French and finally during

[20] The Sublime Porte, also known as the Ottoman Porte, is a metonym for the central government of the Ottoman Empire.

freedom. Recently it was reported that his granddaughter, Colette, is now working on some papers he left, trying to group them in a biography. Already, three biographies have been published about him, but none of them has given him his due or succeeded in penetrating the hidden recesses of his broad mind and equally noble soul.

He passed away in Damascus at age 85 and in a state funeral, some 250,000 persons walked behind his coffin. He received presidential honors at his funeral as one of the founders of the Syrian Republic, unlike any prime minister before or after him. He was buried in a most simple grave.

18

FAIZ BEY EL-KHOURY

Faiz Bey El-Khoury was the youngest son of Shaikh Yacoub and Hamdi Fakhoury and the youngest brother to the great Faris. A few years after his birth in Kfeir, his father passed away and his brother Ayoub, second oldest, became the head of the family. It was he who had to look after the land and raise his younger brothers and sisters. These circumstances prevented Ayoub from becoming as highly educated as his brothers, yet he was no exception to his line, a very bright person. While young, he married Hannah Mikhail and remained in Kfeir all his life.

Because Faiz's mother, Hamdi, went to Damascus to care for her son Faris, who was endeavoring to establish himself, Hannah cared for Faiz as if he were her own child. Hannah took the child Faiz with her whenever she had to be out of the house. It was not long after Hamdi went to Damascus that she passed away.

Faiz attended the village school in Kfeir for only a short period, then, upon the will of his elder brother, Faris, he was sent to Damascus to pursue his studies at the Protestant School, known as Yousef El-Teen. (The author also attended this school, but for one year only). During this time, he lived at his brother's house along with his sister, Rashida.

When he had completed his studies at this school, Faiz went to the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut[21] for one year to strengthen his knowledge of English. Returning to Damascus after that, he entered the Maktab Anbar Preparatory Military School. For a Christian to attend this school was unusual in those days, but Faiz braved it. He liked this school so much that one day he took me to

[21] In 1920, the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) became the American University of Beirut (AUB).

it and introduced me to the dean with the intention that I would enroll in the coming scholastic year. But I preferred Sidon and the American atmosphere.

After graduating from Maktab Anbar with high honors, Faiz was sent to Constantinople to pursue his military studies at the Sultani Military Academy. Faris Bey was also there as a deputy in parliament. Both were very active in Arab organizations that worked for the independence of the Arabs from the Ottoman Empire!

When World War I broke out, Turkish agents had infiltrated some Arab secret organizations working for the liberation of their countries They turned in to the Ottoman authorities a list of Arab "traitors." Tens of Arab prominent men and intelligentsia were rounded up and imprisoned at Aley in Lebanon. Among them was Faiz El-Khoury. Many of these detainees were court martialed and on May 5, 1916, Jamal Pasha signed execution orders for twenty-one of those found guilty. Others were banished to faraway places in Turkey.[22]

It so happened that during his military studies in Istanbul, Faiz's roommate was a Turkish cadet by the name of Nourudin. Later, Nourudin married the daughter of Jamal Pasha, the

[22] Jamal Pasha was known among the local Arab inhabitants as *al-Saffah*, "the Blood Shedder," being responsible for the hanging of many Lebanese, Syrian Shi'a Muslims and Christians wrongly accused of treason on 6 May 1916 in Damascus and Beirut.

[23] In his political memoirs, the leader of the "Beirut Reform Movement" Salim Ali Salam recalls the following:

Jamal Pasha resumed his campaign of vengeance; he began to imprison most Arab personalities, charging them with treason against the State. His real intent was to cut off the thoughtful heads, so that, as he put it, the Arabs would never again emerge as a force, and no one would be left to claim for them their rights ... After returning to Beirut [from Istanbul], I was summoned ... to Damascus to greet Jamal Pasha ... I took the train ... and upon reaching Aley we found that the whole train was reserved for the prisoners there to take them to Damascus ... When I saw them, I realized that they were taking them to Damascus to put them to death. So ... I said to myself: how shall I be able to meet with this butcher on the day on which he will be slaughtering the notables of the country? And how will I be able to converse with him? ... Upon arriving in Damascus, I tried hard to see him that same evening, before anything happened, but was not successful. The next morning all was over, and the ... notables who had been brought over from Aley were strung up on the gallows.

Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army in Syria, the Military Governor of the area and the head of the court martial. The court which condemned Faiz El-Khoury to death was composed of three members including Nourudin who refused to sign the verdict. A quarrel between him and the other members ensued. Finally, the case was taken up to Jamal Pasha for his decision.

"Faiz El-Khoury—not guilty!" roared Jamal Pasha.[23]

"Yes!" replied Nourudin calmly.

"But I can sign his death warrant!" threatened Jamal.

"I'll divorce your daughter!" countered Nourudin, and added, "Then the Lord knows what I'll do next!"

Jamal pondered for a while then breathed heavily saying, "Have it your way!"

And so Faiz El-Khoury was set free! He came to Damascus, but no sooner had he reached the ancient city then he fell sick with the dreadful typhus fever which he fought for three months. After regaining his health, he joined his army in Asia Minor as assistant to the Judicial Councilor. It was not long afterwards when the Bolshevik revolution broke out in Russian, with the royal family and thousands of the Russian noblemen massacred. The Russia Empire was upside down and then remodeling into the Nihilists' heart's desire—a crimson shambles. The Russian army withdrew from all the Turkish territory it had captured and the Turkish army moved up at its heels—from Diyar-Bakr to Batumi on the Black Sea, where it made its headquarters. Faiz remained there till the end of the war, when he was discharged in Istanbul and returned to Damascus.

While in the Turkish Army, Faiz developed a cordial relation with Wahib Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army on the Russian Front. Years later, while on his way to Mecca on a pilgrimage, Pasha passed through Damascus. It happened that Faiz El-Khoury, then the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, gave Wahib Pasha a state reception. Instead of lodging him in a hotel, he took him to his house as his guest during all his stay in Damascus.

Faiz opened a law office in Damascus and worked for some time. Realizing that his knowledge of the law did not satisfy his ambition for a great and glorious judicial career, he decided to go to Paris to

obtain his doctor's degree from the best law institution in Europe. But he needed money to finance his project which he did not have. His brother Faris was not, at that time, financially able to pay the expenses of three years study in Paris. So, Allah does shut a door until He opens another. Faiz's brother, Daoud, was a prosperous manufacturer in Brazil, and to Brazil he went, obtaining the financial aid he needed. The three years of study required at the Sorbonne University for the doctorate, was obtained in one year and a half. Returning to Damascus, he opened his law office and was very successful, especially after he had won the famous Hourani murder case.

Not very long afterwards, Faiz Bey was appointed counsellor to the Damascus High Court of Appeal. He was also appointed a professor at the Law College of the Syrian University of Damascus, teaching Roman and European Civil laws, which he taught from 1922 to 1940. In later years, he became the Dean of the Law College at the Syrian University. In 1928, he was appointed member of the committee that drew up the Syrian Constitution and his conflict with his Moslem colleagues over the preamble of the constitution is treated somewhere else in this study.

Faiz Bey wanted to enter election for the Syrian parliament which he could not do as a Protestant (because his elder brother, Faris, was in parliament as the Christian minority representative). Faiz surmounted this hurdle by changing his denomination from Protestant to Orthodox. He entered the election on that ticket and won against strong opposition.

In 1934, he was elected to Parliament and was nicknamed "The Ghoul" of the Parliament. It came after a heated debate in Parliament when he climbed the rostrum and began speaking to the deputies in Arabic, to be interrupted by the French delegate, whom he addressed in French, and when the Prime Minister, who was born and raised in Turkey, started to attack him in broken and stilted Arabic, he lashed him in his refined Istanbul Turkish. After that, opposing elements feared to clash with him during the future meetings of parliament.

In 1935, he was elected president of the Damascus bar, and in 1936, minister of national economy, previous to which he was

appointed minister of agriculture. Passengers going to Damascus from Beirut would notice all along both sides of the road from the Lebanese frontier to the gardens outside Damascus, two rows of trees, some acacia and others poplar. Faiz had supervised their planting while he was minister of agriculture. Very few of these trees now remain! In 1939, he became minister of finance. It was during this year that he became the dean of the law college of the Syrian University, an office which he held until 1943. In 1941-1942, he was the minister of foreign affairs from where he went to the ministry of finance, from 1942-1943. During this time, he was the president of the Mira office, created to purchase wheat and other grains from farmers throughout Syria and distribute their products at a fixed price. The effect was to prevent hoarding and speculation of this vital material during the war. In 1944, he returned to the ministry of foreign affairs.

From 1945-1947, Faiz El-Khoury was Syria's ambassador to Moscow. His experiences and observations at that time, especially his visit to the Orthodox Patriarch in Moscow, resulted in a book, some chapters of which were published in an Egyptian weekly to which the Russians strongly objected. As long as they were hiring his palace for their embassy at an appreciable yearly rent, he stopped publishing his memoirs. He had written in two versions, one in Arabic, the other in English, which I had the pleasure of editing. Now, no one knows anything about the fate of these books!

From Moscow, Faiz Bey went to Washington in the same capacity as Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary where he remained till 1952. During his stay in Washington, he was appointed member of the Syrian delegation to the United Nations Organization. He was also appointed Governor of the International Bank for Development and Construction for one term, and also in the same capacity to the World Monetary Organization from 1947-1951. In 1947, he was appointed head of the Syrian delegation to the United Nations and in 1951, he was a member of the Japanese Peace Conference held in San Francisco, California. In 1952, he became Syria's ambassador to London where he remained until 1956, after which he returned to Damascus. He passed away in Beirut in 1959 following a severe heart attack.

Faiz Bey El-Khoury was a fine poet and the author of several law books, among which is his book about Roman laws compared with Islamic laws. He wrote another book on European Civil Law and a third on Penal Code. He had also translated law books from French and Turkish into Arabic. He was married twice. His first wife was divorced; his second gave birth to two girls and a boy, who was found killed in his hotel room in Washington while he was studying at a military school in Virginia. His death is shrouded in mystery.

Of all the Arab statesmen who lived in his time, Faiz El-Khoury was, perhaps, the most dashing, most colorful, most romantic and most brilliant jurist east of the Suez. He was one of the swords of the Syrian independence movement.

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THE EL-KHOURY FAMILY

Khalil El-Khoury, The Judge of Judges (1886–1967)
Khalil Bey El-Khoury was the third son of Yacoub and comes next after his brother Ayoub. His primary education was at the American Mission School in Sidon, known as Gerard Institute from where he went to the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) in Beirut, now the American University of Beirut (AUB). After graduating from the SPC, Khalil emigrated to Egypt where he could benefit from his knowledge of English. This was the prevailing trend of the young men who knew English in those days, because England was then ruling Egypt and Sudan. There he studied law and when he got his degree, he went to Sudan where he was duly employed by the British Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan as Justice of the Peace. His work was in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, where he remained some nineteen years until he went on pension.

During his career as a judge, he rose up to the office of Judge of Judges, a position ranking with a Supreme Court judge in America. During this time and after World War I, Khalil Bey came to Syria to spend his summer vacation with his brothers in Damascus and to get married, if possible. In Damascus, he remained at his brother Faris' house. At that time, Syria was a newly independent country and in dire need of highly educated and experienced men in all branches. Khalil Bey was duly appointed judge of some high court of appeal and willy-nilly he attended court for a week or so. The first day he sat on the bench and then left court at noon, people besieged him with their demands and grievances and their endless requests to announce verdicts in their favor. They followed him in the corridors, on the steps, around his carriage and some were

impudent enough to follow him to the house! He was not accustomed to this procedure. He left the office saying that nothing was yet settled in Syria and that he would not gamble on his career and pension and went back to Sudan. He married a girl from Damascus by the name of Mary Gehamy and took her along to the Sudan where they remained until he received his pension.

He was decorated with the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by the King of England, and the King of Egypt bestowed upon him the title of a "Bey" honoraria. Returning to Lebanon, he lived in Beirut in order to educate his children at American schools and to be close to his companions from his time in Sudan. His abode was in Ras Beirut Quarter, around the American University of Beirut, his Alma Mater. Khalil-Bey had two sons, Samir and Naoil and one daughter, Leila. He passed away in Beirut.

Ghalib El-Khoury (1919–1952)

Ghalib was the third son of Ayoub El-Khoury; he was a very promising lawyer and one of the boldest of his time. His early education was at Marj-Ayoun, then Damascus and the Law College of the Syrian University. After doing his apprenticeship, he opened his law office in Damascus, building his judicial career step by step. He soon became a well-known lawyer.

Ghalib was a member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party with the leaders of which he and other young men had a clash over party principles resulting in their expulsion. At that time Saade, the party leader, was away and upon his return Ghalib was chosen to present their case to him, which he did in an excellent judicial way. Once his plea was over, Saade said that in party procedures once a decision is made it cannot be revoked!

Later, Ghalib fell sick with galloping leukemia and blood was desperately needed. It was those brave PPS boys who rushed to the hospital by the tens, offering their blood, but in vain. When he passed away, some four hundred of them walked in pairs before his body to his final resting place.

Ghalib was engaged to the famous authoress, Emily Abirashid Nousrallah, whom he inspired to write fiction.

Daoud El-Khoury, The Philosopher (1888-1955)

Daoud El-Khoury is the fourth son of Yacoub. When of age, he went to the American Mission School in Sidon. He was physically very strong and when a famous European professional wrestler came to the school to exhibit his strength, Daoud jumped to the ring to wrestle him. The wrestler's name was Alexander Doubridge, or something along that order. He allowed Daoud to spar with him for a while and then told him to stick to his books.

Daoud went to Brazil at an early age and lived there all his life, save for a short trip he made to Damascus in the late thirties, bringing along his 1,500-page philosophical book entitled, "The Universe," with plans to have it published. The project was not feasible for some reason or another. With a pang in his heart and a fiasco in his mind, he carried his manuscript back to Brazil where several chapters were finally published in an Arabic periodical.

In Brazil, Daoud was a highly successful merchant. He had a macaroni factory in the city Araraquara where he was married to a very elegant lady for a wife who gave birth to a boy, Zouhair and two daughters, Hamidah and Samira. Zouhair became the owner of a chain of restaurants in the city of Sao Paulo, called Manara (Lighthouse).

After Daoud's death, his son, Zouhair, sent the author a word asking for some stones and soil from Kfeir to sprinkle over the grave of his father. The author duly airmailed him about two kilograms which were taken to the grave in proper rites and ceremony with priests officiating and they were sprinkled over his grave—a symbol that he was buried in the soil of his fathers.

Souhail El-Khoury

Souhail, the only son of the Great Faris, was born in Damascus, a place which he seldom left. His early education was at Yousef el-Teen School, the only Protestant school in the ancient city. This school taught Arabic and English only. From this school, Souhail went to the Lazarite School in the same city which also taught Arabic and French. Graduating from the Lazarite, Souhail entered the Law College of the Syrian University in Damascus and graduated. After entering the bar, he opened his private law office. He worked

for a while as a lawyer relying on the advice and guidance of his father in this field. In due course, Souhail was appointed counselor to the Municipality of Damascus—an office which he held for a number of years, along with his private law business.

Souhail later obtained a doctorate in law from the University of Leon in France. Following the hasty unity between Egypt and Syria in 1961, a new election for parliament was staged and Souhail was elected as a deputy, representing the minorities of the Christian community in Damascus. During his term of office, he was chosen Minister of Municipal Affairs and Agrarian Reforms—a post which he held for five months: two in office and the remaining three, detained with the entire cabinet at the Military Hospital near Damascus, following a Baathist coup, which brought that party to power, where they remain.

It has been wisely said that one woman is a headache, two a calamity and three a riot! Souhail was gifted with six of them! When he married Lily Mahaleh, her mother and sister came with her trousseau and installed themselves permanently at his house, to be followed from time to time by Lily's brother's wife and her daughter who were Souhail's next door neighbors, to be joined later by his daughter, Colette. He used to call them, "The Hexagon Star of Israel!" They formed an "anvil chorus," and whenever he would say a word, they would explode in unison (from the pleasure of self-assertation). He knew the source of his headache, and when he had enough ground, with a master stroke, he divorced Lily getting rid of the whole shooting match! In time, he married Nely Turk who had no children.

Now Souhail lives at his house in Damascus, doing practically nothing. His colleagues of the old Nationalist Bloc had either died or left the country after so many coups, even his hunting companions have melted away. As a young man, Souhail was very handsome and likable, pleasant and obliging. Basically, he was very active and at certain periods he was the president of the Syrian Hunters Association and the Rotary Club. He is also the head of the Protestant Synod in Syria and Lebanon. From his first wife, he had two boys and a girl. The boys are Faris, Jr. and Samir and the girl is Colette.

Colette El-Khoury

Colette is the only daughter of Souhail. She was born in Damascus and lived there practically all her life, save for a short period in France where she went with her European husband and when they divorced, she rushed home.

Colette's early education was at the Damascus French School and from there she went to the Syrian University and majored in French and Arabic literature. Now she lives at home and teaches at the Syrian University and writes novels and short stories in Arabic and poetry in French. Of the latter, she already has two volumes published, while in Arabic she has about ten volumes published in novels and short stories. It was recently reported that she is working on some memoirs of her grandfather. Colette has a daughter from her European husband named, Nara, who is married and lives in Damascus. She is a medical doctor. Recently, Colette was elected as a deputy to the Syrian Parliament—the first woman in the history of Syria to reach such an office. The first of four books about the life of her grandfather, Faris, was recently published in Damascus.

Samir Khalil El-Khoury

Samir Khalil El-Khoury, of Lebanon, is the President of Associated Consulting Engineers S.A.L., a professional firm of engineers, architects and planners trained and organized to offer multi-disciplinary architectural and engineering consulting services. The company was established as a partnership in Lebanon and later incorporated into a shareholding company, which has evolved to serve the Middle East and West Africa. Professor El-Khoury was born in Khartoum in 1926 and studied at the American University of Beirut where he gained his B.A. then B.S. in civil engineering. In the USA, he received his M.S. in civil engineering at Lehigh University. Initially a Municipal Engineer in Damascus, he became a director of a contracting and concrete construction company from 1955-1956 in Amman. For the following two years, he was director of the design department of reconstruction authority in Lebanon, joining Associated Consulting Engineers in 1958. He was also an associate professor of civil engineering at the American University of Beirut, where he was concerned in teaching advanced

graduate courses in sanitary engineering from 1953-1955. He is a member of the Order of Engineers and Architects of Lebanon, the Lebanese Public Health Association, Institution of Civil Engineers of UK, a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Public Health Association of the UK.

Publications of Professor El-Khoury include: "Sewerage and Sewage Disposal in Lebanon," 1956; "The Role of the Sanitary Engineering in the Lebanese Society," 1968; "Solid Waste—Its Hazards and Disposals," 1968; "Solids and Liquid Waste Disposal in Lebanon and Environmental Health, and Developing Science," 1983.

Samir is fluent in Arabic, French and English. His hobbies are swimming, tennis, walking, music, reading, writing and do-it-yourself projects. Professor El-Khoury is the son of the late Judge Khalil Yacoub El-Khoury and Marie (Gehamy) El-Khoury. In 1953, he married Adelheid Bill and they have three sons: Osama, Ziyad and Basem, all of them are engineers.

Adell El-Khoury

At school, Adell was a very bright boy, but at Marj-Ayoun High School, he learned to smoke. His teacher, an old Protestant and a frantically fanatical copper-head, caught him smoking during recess and before the entire student body, tried to beat him but was unable to do so. Adell left school and went to Damascus where he found work with firms that sold building materials. When the British Army entered Syria and began its huge fortification program, Adell worked with the Army as a foreman of works the whole time the British were working. After that, he was taken in by the General Security Department and after a short period of training was sent to the frontiers where he saw service in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq, where his health deteriorated. He came home to Damascus for treatment and rest. After regaining his health, he was put in charge of the Political Department of his outfit with about 40 men under his command. Coups and countercoups in the country finally threw him out of the country as he was considered one of the best-informed intelligence officers of his time. Adell was an old member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, whose affiliation destroyed his career. He passed away at a

young age after fighting an incurable disease. The PPS offered him a full military funeral which included a twenty-one-cannon salute and two hundred members in a line of twos following a mounted cannon on a jeep behind his coffin.

Abla El-Khoury

Styled as the leading female radio announcer in the Arab World, Abla El-Khoury was a glamorous girl. In her youth, she was strikingly beautiful, jolly, bold and extremely self-confident and self-reliant. Her education at the Village School and Marj-Ayoun did not exceed the fifth-grade certificate. She married a Syrian District Governor, Khalil Al-Assad, who passed away while she was very young. Thereafter, she became an announcer at the Syrian Broadcasting Station.

Alba's voice was heard over the Middle East Radio Station network, the Voice of America, the Voice of the Gospel and practically all Arabian Gulf radio stations, including that of Saudi Arabia. She also worked for one year at the British Broadcasting Corporation in London. Abla was the first woman in the history of the BBC to read the news in Arabic on account of her rich and strong voice, excellent reading ability and the various strata of her voice.

One day, the director of the BBC called all the Arab employees at the station for a meeting and asked if there was anything they may think needed to improve their living conditions and work at the station. No one said a word and finally, Abla stood up and raised her finger. "Yes, Mrs. Khoury, what is it?" asked the director. "We want a cooker!" announced Abla, thus causing a sudden uproar in the hall. She knew that nouns in English are formed from verbs and to cook, in her opinion, becomes a cooker, just like a walker, driver, catcher, etc. The director knew what she meant and readily complied with her request.

For a good number of years, she worked at the Lebanese Station and wrote articles for magazines and newspapers in Beirut. Her autobiography, or at least ten installments, were published in "The Lubnanya" magazine of Beirut. Her book about the Nobel Prize Winners for Literature was recently published in Beirut. Now she is working on a book about the famous women of the world.

Abla is the type of woman that does not know when to be silent regardless of consequences. It is in her blood to talk, criticize and attack when there is a ground for that. This boldness had sent her to jail in both Syria and Lebanon on the pretense that she was an influential member in some political party when she cannot possibly take orders from anybody under the sun or beneath the moon! Her plight led one to humorously remark saying, "If two men were to quarrel in the Vacant Quarter of Arabia and one of them happened to be a PPS, Abla El-Khoury must go to jail in Beirut or Damascus!" However, she had the merit medal from the Lebanese Government.

Many articles were written in Abla's praise, also many more poems, the most famous of which was written by the equally famous poet, "Adonis," which appeared in his collection in 1952 under the title, "Early Poems" under, "They Say I Am Through."

"To Abla El-Khoury"
By "Adonis"

They say I am through,
And no more oil and light in my heart.
I pass by the roses—what do they care?
Whether I laugh or weep?
But in my vision and mind, the roses have a morne,
In which I erase and erased.
I love! How I love my beauty!
And in it I worship my echo,
How it was mine and other's guide.
How thirsty I am!
When, O my blood, my youth,
You would utter, I drank my full?
I yearned to a date, to guide my morne,
To a wide and deep heart to scatter in my path,
Or store in my veins,
And then discard between life and death!
When, O my blood, my youth, you would cry,
I have drunk my full.

They say I am through,
But I have the earth with all its glamour and glory,
And if wounded by its palm I am worshipped by its heart,
And when its thorns hinder me, I am snatched by its flowers!
Let them say I am through,
But I have the generations,
Which are drunk when I pass on their mind.
Let them say I am through, but on each and every road,
One thousand leap to me,
And many more houses and their shadows,
Smile and rejoice at my presence!
Tomorrow every mouth shall murmur about me,
And I only wish that I had passed by her,
And poured my youth and art in her hands,
And I hope that I do not sing but her,
And a thousand hope!

Kamal Boushy

Kamal Boushy, born in London, is the son of Abla El-Khoury and Kamil Boushy. In Beirut, Kamal attended French schools studying French and Arabic. He graduated from AUB with a master's degree in Business Administration. He worked with the UNRWA[24] of the United Nations in Beirut for a period until it became risky to move around. He went to the Arabian Gulf States and worked with a commercial company for some time then moved to that commercial empire known as American Express where he is now a branch manager.

Dr. Sami El-Khoury

Dr. El-Khoury's early education was at the village school followed by high school in Marj-Ayoun. From there, he studied first at the Orthodox School and then at the Franco-Arab School in Damascus following that by entering the Medical College of the Syrian University. During his last year of medical studies, he fell sick and had to leave school for the remainder of that year. Regaining his health, he returned to the Medical College and finished his studies

[24] The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

there. He accepted a position with the United Nations (UNRWA) as head of their Tuberculosis Department for Palestinian Refugees in Syria. Sami was a prominent member in a political party when, as a doctor, he had no business in parties and party politics to which he was neither equipped nor educated. Political developments in Syria led him to leave the country and come to Lebanon and from there, he went to America to study for his post-graduate course. After that, he accepted a position at Glen Dale Hospital[25] in Maryland, and took another course in preventative medicine which led him to a high position with the Preventative Medicine Department in Washington. Later, he was sent to Amman, Jordan to help manage the newly established Health City. After going on pension from the U.S. government, he was hired by the Jordanian government to continue his work with them. Now, he is the Dean of the College of Nursing in Amman.

Dr. Nassim El-Khoury

Dr. Nassim El-Khoury's first education was at the village school from where he went to Beirut and enrolled at the Teachers College, earning his baccalaureate degree along with his teacher's certificate in Arabic Literature. He taught school for a while while also working as a journalist. He entered the Lebanese University for additional studies in Arabic Literature and then enrolled at the Sorbonne, earning a doctorate degree. He taught Arabic Literature at Sorbonne while working with some Arabic magazines published in Paris. Returning to Beirut, he became the Dean at the College of Literature at the Lebanese University.

Rajeh El-Khoury

Rajeh is the son of Chafic El-Khoury. He was born at Kfeir and attended the village school and studied Arabic and French. Graduating from the village school, he left the village to pursue his higher studies at Sidon. Being inclined towards journalism, he began his career working with "El-Hayat" Daily, until it was closed

[25] Glenn Dale Hospital was a tuberculosis sanatorium and isolation hospital in Glenn Dale, Maryland, near Washington, DC. It is a large facility, consisting of 23 buildings on 216 acres that was built in 1934 and closed in 1981 due to asbestos.

following the assassination of its owner. From here, he went to "El-Ammal" Daily and now writes editorials which are very popular. Rajeh's daughter, Nadin, is the Lebanese swimming champion.

BOOK III

The Kfeirians

20

KFEIRIAN INDIVIDUALS[26]

James George Abourezk[27]

Jim Abourezk (born February 24, 1931) is an American attorney and politician who served as a United States Representative and United States Senator from South Dakota. He was the first Greek Orthodox Christian of Lebanese-Antiochian descent to serve in the United States Senate. He was generally viewed as critical of US foreign policy in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) area, particularly regarding Palestine and Israel.

A Democrat, he represented South Dakota in the United States Senate from 1973 until 1979. He was the author of the Indian Child Welfare Act, passed by Congress in 1978 to try to preserve Indian families and tribal culture, by arranging for placement of Indian children in homes of their cultures, as well as to reunite them with families. It gives preference to tribal courts in custody of Indian children domiciled on reservations, and concurrent but presumptive jurisdiction in cases of children outside the reservation.

James George Abourezk was born in Wood, South Dakota, the son of Lena Mickel), and Charles Abourezk, an owner of two general stores. His parents were Lebanese Christians who had immigrated to the United States from the village of Kfeir. He grew up near Wood on the Rosebud Reservation and has lived in South Dakota most of his life.

Between 1948 and 1952, Abourezk served in the United States Navy during the Korean War. After his military service, he earned a degree in civil engineering from the South Dakota School of

[26] The editor assumes these profiles were written between 1955 and 1980.
[27] Four individuals—James Abourezk, Joe Ghiz, Nick Rahall and Frank Zakem—were added by the editor, but mentioned by the author.

Mines in Rapid City in 1961 and a J.D. degree from University of South Dakota School of Law in Vermillion in 1966. He began a legal practice in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Abourezk joined the Democratic Party and was elected in 1970 as a Democrat to the United States House of Representatives, and served from 1971 to 1973. In 1972 he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served from 1973 to 1979. He declined to run for another term. In 1974, TIME magazine named Senator Abourezk as one of the "200 Faces for the Future."

Following his retirement in 1980, Abourezk founded the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, a grassroots civil rights organization. In 1989, he published his *Advise and Dissent: Memoirs of South Dakota and the U.S. Senate.*

Dr. Fawzi Abou Jamra

Dr. Fawzi Abou Jamra's early education was at the village school, then at the City of Suwayda in Jabel Druze of Syria and from there he went to Gerard Institute in Sidon. After graduating from Gerard, he entered the American University of Beirut at its medical college. Graduating from the AUB, he went to the United States and entered Mayo Clinic. There he remained seven years and then returned home to open his private clinic in Beirut and to be accepted on the staff of the American University Hospital. His specialty is plastic surgery in which he is considered one of the leaders of the region.

Colonel Issam Abou Jamra

Colonel Issam Abou Jamra is Dr. Fawzi's brother. His early education was at the village school then at the Makassed School in Sidon where following graduation he entered the Lebanese Military Academy. As a military officer he was sent several times to the USA and Europe to pursue his higher military studies. He became an aide-de-camp to General Antoine Ghanim, and was Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army. Colonel Abou Jamra was considered one of the best artillery officers in the Middle East. Following a military coup by General Aoun, Issam became his assistant and was entrusted with several portfolios in Aoun's government of

1988–1989 including the ministries of justice, telegram, housing, water and electricity. Following the event of October 13 1990, he was forced to leave the country.[28]

Mansour Abou Jamra

Mansour is the brother of Dr. Fawzi and Colonel Issam, his early studies were at the village school then in Sidon from where he entered the Engineering College of the AUB. After graduation, he worked for a while in Lebanon then went to the Arabian Gulf States and worked there as an engineer and contractor, then he expanded his work to Saudi Arabia where he is very successful.

Dr. Shehadi Cantees

Dr. Cantees was the most brilliant student at the local school. He went to Marj-Ayoun for higher studies and was the first in this school as well. He went to Damascus for higher studies. Graduating from the Orthodox School there, he enlisted at the Medical College of the Syrian University, and yet again was the first in his classes. Graduating from the Medical College with high honors, he returned home and began practicing medicine at Hasbaya. Later, he was appointed the County Official Doctor. He is still there doing excellent work. Had he gone abroad for post-graduate studies, Dr. Cantees may have become an incredibly famous doctor!

While we are talking about the doctors from Kfeir, it is rather interesting to note that several of our young men and women have become medical doctors. They are

- Rima El-Khoury, daughter of Dr. Sami, who after graduating in Amman, went to the USA for her post-graduate studies.
- Makram Yousef El-Hage graduated from the AUB Medical College, and now he is working at its hospital.
- Samir Fouad Mikhail is doing post-graduate studies in Greece.
- Mohammad Demashki, after graduating from the School of Dentistry in Tunis, opened the most up-to-date dental clinic in Kfeir.

[28] The October 13 Massacre of 1990 occurred during the final period of the Lebanese Civil War, when hundreds of Lebanese soldiers were executed after they surrendered to Syrian forces.

- Lyla Dhahir is studying in Czechoslovakia; while she is not originally from Kfeir, but her mother was, and her father was a schoolteacher here for a number of years and is married to Mimi Kasab from Kfeir. All their children were born and raised here.

Souhail Demashki

Souhail began his studies at the village school and then went to Sidon and studied for his college requirement entrance. After graduation, he entered the Lebanese University and got his college degree. He was appointed to a position at the same university and rose to be Secretary General of its College of Literature and Sciences.

Major Murad Fakhoury

Major Murad Fakhoury is the son of Jirjis Fakhoury, who was a graduate medical doctor from the American University of Beirut and saw service in Turkish Army on the Russian Front. Major Fakoury's early education was at the village school from where he went to Sidon, and after receiving his baccalaureate entered the Lebanese Military Academy. After graduation, he was sent to France for higher military studies, after which he was sent out again, and this time to the USA for the same purpose. He is considered an excellent infantry officer.

Captain Milad Abou Saab

Captain Milad's early education was at the village school. He and his family moved to Beirut where he studied for entrance to the Lebanese Military Academy. He passed his examination with excellent marks, and is now serving in the Lebanese Army. His specialty is artillery.

Joseph Atallah Ghiz

Joe Ghiz (January 27, 1945–November 9, 1996). Joe Ghiz was the 27th premier of Prince Edward Island from 1986 to 1993, an educator of law and a justice of the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island. He was the father of Robert Ghiz, the 31st premier of PEI, the first premier of a Canadian province to be of non-European descent.

Ghiz was born in Charlottetown, PEI, to Atallah Joseph Ghiz,

a Lebanese corner store owner, and Marguerite F. McKarris. He was a graduate of Dalhousie and Harvard law schools and a Charlottetown lawyer before entering into politics.

He became president of the Prince Edward Island Liberal Party in 1977 and then party leader in 1981. His party lost the 1982 election but Ghiz was elected to the legislature and became leader of the opposition. He led the party to victory in 1986 with the Liberals gaining 20 seats to 11 for the Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island.

Sa'id El-Ghiz

Sa'id El-Ghiz's early education was at the village school, followed by schooling at Sidon's Official School. He then enrolled at the Lebanese University to study geography and history. After graduation, he taught school in Beirut and during this time, he obtained a certificate in Arabic literature. He has translated several books from French to Arabic, and he is the co-author of several history textbooks.

Captain Ismail Hamdan

After Captain Hamdan's early education at the village school, he went to the Makassed School in Sidon. Graduating from the Sidonese School he entered the Lebanese Military Academy. After several years of service, the Army sent him to Paris to pursue his studies in France, remaining there for two years. Returning to Beirut, he was promoted to the rank of a captain, and now he is now stationed in Sidon.

Mounif Hamdan

It has been the prevailing custom among the hillmen when he has a few piasters jingling in his pocket to do one of the following three: divorce his wife, buy a mare, or buy a high-powered rifle.

Mounif's father, who was a goatherd, was no exception. When Mounif and his sister were mere children, his father divorced Mounif's mother. She did not leave the village and go to her parents' village but remained at Kfeir, working as hard as she could in order to support the children, and to keep Mounif, who was a very bright student, at school. After finishing his studies at Kfeir's school, the

family moved to Beirut where his mother found work. During his summer vacation, Mounif worked as a common laborer.

One time he and the author were going from Beirut to Beit-Meri when Mounif looked to the right and the left and said, "You see these buildings, I carried most of their stones on my back when they were under construction!" He did that kind of hard work all through his preparatory studies, after which he entered the Law College of the Lebanese University in Beirut. After graduation he became a candidate for election to the office of Beirut Attorney General, coming out first among the tens of candidates. After arguments with the Lebanese election official, he was installed in his rightful office at the age of 27. He married but divorced his wife, who became a high-ranking official at the United Nations.

Captain Faris Kassab

Officers in the Lebanese Army, Police Force, Gendarmery, General Security are, as a rule, graduates form the Lebanese Military Academy. Once in a long while an element from the ranks becomes a commissioned officer. Faris Kassab is one of those. His early education was at the village school, then at Bhamdoun College, after which he entered the General Security Department and served all over the Lebanese frontier posts. Finally, he came to Beirut's International Airport. During these hectic days in Lebanon, with no mail going out or coming, Faris became Kfeir's Postmaster General, but now he is working at his outfit headquarters in Beirut.

Of the young and promising officers from Kfeir and in the various branches of the armed forces, we have Lt. Fawaz Abou Rizk and Lt. Ghazi Tweel who were killed in Beirut during this abortive war.

Engineers—the Kahil Trio

Riad Kahil

Riad is the oldest son of Joseph Kahil and Alice El-Khoury. Finishing his studies at Kfeir, Riad was taken by his uncle to Damascus to pursue his studies there. At graduation, Riad made the highest grades in Syria, an honor which, by law, entitled him to enter higher education in any country of his choosing at the expense of the Syrian government. But Riad was a Lebanese

and worse yet, a Christian Maronite! As soon as the results of the examination were declared, telephone calls started bombarding us with their congratulations. This lasted twenty-four hours only when the family was officially informed that Riad was not the first in Syria but the second! The alibi was that there was a slight mistake in adding the grades and the mistake was one fourth of a mark, and that Riad, instead of studying abroad, may now study any subject he chooses at any Syrian college or university at government expense. Riad chose engineering at the government college in Aleppo. After graduation, Riad worked with a Yugoslav company which was implementing projects in Syria. This company sent him to Yugoslavia for a training period. Upon his return, Syria was passing through a political upheaval which kept him away. He landed in Beirut where he began to work in his own engineering office. He taught for some time at the Lebanese University and took pilot courses at the AUB. Riad is considered one of the best authorities on nature conservation, re-enforced concrete, and sanitary planning.

Imad Kahil

After finishing his studies at Kfeir, Imad Kahil, the second son of Yousef, went to Sidon to enter the technical school there. After graduation he worked with an engineering company before going to Paris to pursue his higher engineering studies. There he remained for seven years at the Beaux Arts School, studying architectural engineering and town planning. Returning to Beirut, he and two other engineers formed a company that existed a few years until war in broke out. During this period, Imad taught at the Engineering College of the Lebanese University, and is now working in Amman, Jordan.

Jihad Kahil

Jihad is the third son of Joseph. His early education was at Kfeir and then in Beirut. Finishing his preparatory studies, he entered the Lebanese National Institute of Fine Arts to study architecture. After graduation, Jihad opened his own engineering office. Later he accepted an appointment as the chief engineer of the

Lebanese Office for the Preservation of Historical Buildings, and in the meantime taught mathematics at high schools. When the war broke out Jihad accepted a position with a firm in Saudi Arabia where he remained several years. Returning home, he went to Italy and remained there almost two years to work on his doctor's degree at the University of Rome, with ICCROM[29], a UNESCO institute. Now he is working in his engineering office in Beirut.

Antoin Lakes

Antoin was educated in Beirut where his parents had moved from Kfeir. After finishing his preparatory studies, he went to France and studied engineering at Leon University. Returning home, he worked for a while with an Italian firm in Beirut then opened his private engineering office. When the road to the Gulf States opened, he went there and was remarkably successful in his engineering and contracting business. He married an Australian woman who succeeded in whizzing him to Australia!

Emily Abirashid Nasrallah

Although her name does not sound Kfeirian, Emily was born and raised in Kfeir. Her late father, Daoud Abirashid, was from the neighboring village of Koukaba and her mother, Lutfa Abou Nassir, was from Kfeir and both have lived all their lives in Kfeir. Emily is one of Kfeir's best boosters. After finishing her studies at the village school, she went to Shweifat College. Finishing her studies there, she went to Beirut College for Women where she got her college degree. She accepted a job as the editor of the women's section in the Arabic weekly, El-Sayyad of Beirut, a job which she held over 15 years. Leaving the newspaper work, Emily accepted a position as the head of the Public Relations Office at the Beirut College for Women. In due course, her writings, lectures, and family care forced her to resign her job. Now she devotes all her time to her writings as a fictionist, social activities, and lecturing. As an author, Emily has published several popular volumes of short stories and novels. She is happily married with her husband, Philip Nasrallah, and family in Beirut. Her husband recently went to Egypt where he has a chicken farm.

At the present time, Emily is in Canada where her brothers live.

[29] Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

She is trying to have some of her books translated into English and published there. She has succeeded in translating and publishing her book, "September Birds."

Nickolas Joseph Rahall II

Nick Rahall (born May 20, 1949) is an American former politician and member of the Democratic Party who served as a U.S. Representative from West Virginia from 1977 to 2015. He is the longest-serving member ever of the United States House of Representatives from the state of West Virginia. Rahall was born in Beckley, West Virginia, the son of Mary Alice and Nicholas Joseph Rahall. He is a Presbyterian of Lebanese-Protestant descent, whose grandparents immigrated from Kfeir. His family-owned radio station WWNR, which his father started with his uncles Farris, Sam, and Deem, and expanded to own other radio stations in a number of states. Nick graduated in 1971 from Duke University. He attended graduate school at the George Washington University, but did not graduate. He then worked as a sales rep for his family's radio station, WWNR. He served as president of the Mountaineer Tour and Travel Agency in 1974, and was president of West Virginia Broadcasting. He went to work as staff assistant for the late U.S. Senator Robert Byrd who he identifies as a mentor.

Issam Thabid

Issam was educated at Beirut where his family had lived for a good number of years. He graduated from the engineering college. After that, he worked for a while in Beirut and then he went to Chad, in Africa, where he remained for some time, before moving to the Gulf States. His other two brothers are now working in Syria on engineering projects.

Frank Zakem

Frank Joseph Zakem (1931–2013) was born in Quebec, Canada to Albert H Zakem and Haniya Ann Marji of Kfeir, but grew up in Prince Edward Island. He was a renowned educator and author, businessman, and politician. He served as a city councilor for the Charlottetown City Council from 1964 to 1974 and was mayor from

1975 to 1977. He is the author of *The Corner Store Experience* and *The Zakem-Marji Story, Five Generations,*[30] a 110-page genealogical accounting of his extended family. He has been highly honored by his community and was presented with an honorary doctorate by the University of Prince Edward Island.

□ □ □

There are a good number of our budding young engineers who are working either in Lebanon, or the Arabian Gulf States or Saudi Arabia. Hanna Mikhail, who graduated in Beirut, works there with the government and his private engineering works. Soulieman Mikhail, who graduated in Beirut, went to the Arabian Gulf States and is doing well. Ousama, Ziyad, and Bassim El-Khoury, sons of Sameer, are all engineers; one in Beirut, the other two in the USA, and others, such as Hatim Demashky.

Among other college and university graduates of Kfeir are the following, with many others are on the way.

Mrs. Hassim El-Khoury
Samia Tweel
Salima Hamdan
Nameh Abou Rahall
Habio Abou Jamra
Akram Abou Jamra
Karouk Naufa
Nadir Fakhoury
Halim Abou Rahall
Scuhail Thabit
Hamau Naufal
Walid Abou Nasser Bassett
Hatim Blimashki
Mike Hati
Jamal Hati
Shadi Hati
Bassim Hati

[30] Zakem's family history has been entered into the editor's extensive public genealogy file which is available for perusal. Interested parties should contact the editor.

21

KFEIRIAN FAMILIES

There are a good number of Druze and Christian families that once lived in Kfeir, but from where they came and where they went, we have no trace. Among the disappearing and unknown families are the following, most of whom are Druze:

Abou Yaala	Aziz	Rizk
Abou Teen	Harb	Saab
Abou Araj	Hamzi	Shoeiri
Amer	Habib	Shokair
Abra	Hriek	Saleh
Abou Khair	Hilal	Zein
Abou Ziki	Hamra	
AbouMaghetheb	Nadaf	

The Soulieman and Farah families vanished from Kfeir before 1900. When they came to Kfeir is unknown but their houses on the main street are now owned by the children of Yousef Hawarni, who married an Abou Farah woman, and he and his children inherited the Abou Farah property. This family was commonly known as Juriess. Wadih, the last Farah went to Brazil and perhaps passed away there.

Abou El-Izz

Currently, the Abou El-Izz family is one of the largest Druze families in the village. Hundreds of years ago, they came to us from Bitkhnay Village in the Chouf District of Mount Lebanon. The branch of this family there is known as Abou El-Hussin. The first grandfather to come to Kfeir was called Abou El-Izz. At Kfeir,

they were chiefly goatherds and farmers, owning some land in the mountain to the east of the village. From Kfeir, this family spread out to neighboring villages such as Memiss and Hasbaya. A few of their men went to North and South America; some passing away there and others returning. Another branch of this family is to be found in Jabel El-Druze in Syria. Most of its Kfeirian men are now skilled laborers, working in Beirut, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf States.

Abou Jamra

In the distant past, the Abou Jamra family was an Arabian tribe living in Hejaz[31]. At the rise of Islam, a man by the name of Abou Jamra embraced the new faith and was one of the Prophet Mohammad's followers. When the Moslem armies invaded Syria, the Abou Jamra tribe came with them and settled in present day southern Syria between Jabel El-Druze and the Lajah area near another tribe of Arabia by the name of Ghoussain, with whom they had everlasting quarrels resulting in routing out the Abou Jamra from the area. The Abou Jamra family went to a region near Damascus, but were soon on the move to the eastern Bokan area settling near the large Christian Village of Aitha el-Foukham.

The Abou Jamra tribe came to Syria with their nomadic mentality, but intermarriage between them and the Christians of Aitha began to occur. In due course, the Abou Jamra family embraced Christianity. When their numbers in Aitha increased, some of them came to Kfeir with their families. This happened perhaps about 1400 CE and was followed until all the Abou Jamras were well settled here. Years later, when the Abou Jamras had prospered in Kfeir, they had a quarrel with the Orthodox community, causing them to change their sect from Orthodox to Catholicism. Even though they built the present Catholic church of the village, they did not remain long as Catholics but returned to the Orthodox faith. From Kfeir, the Abou Jamra migrated to various places such as Damascus, Tyre, Beirut, Deir Mimass, Majdal Shamiss, Zahle, Jabel Druze and Kounietra before its destruction by the Israelis.

At home and beyond, the Abou Jamra family has produced some

[31] The Hejaz is a region in the west of Saudi Arabia, known as the "Western Province." It includes the cities of Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and Taif.

outstanding men. In Brazil, Dr. Sa'id, a graduate of medicine from the AUB, was a medical doctor and owner/publisher of *Al-Akhbar*, the first Arab newspaper in San Paulo, becoming an outstanding leader in the Arab community there. His brother, Loufick, was also well known there and a member of the Orthodox Council in Brazil. He was decorated by the Syrian Government several years ago when he came to Damascus. Other family included Abdullah Habib Abou Jamra from Toledo, Ohio, in the USA. Raji is a famous poet and a broker in Brazil.

Among the noted men of this family in the past was Jirjis Abou Duhin Abou Jamra, who was a brave and noted leader and contemporary of the Amir Bashear Shihabi, the Great. In Majdal Shamiss, Shahin and his brother, Ibrahim, were noted warriors, liked by their Druze neighbors. Yousif Sahin was one of the bravest horsemen in the region. Once, with a sword and a lance, he routed several mounted Turkish Gendarmes at Souk el-Khan, the weekly marketplace near the Hasbani River.

In recent years, some noted men came out of this family. Salim was a capable journalist and later was appointed the Kiammakam[32] of Rashaya District where he passed away. The late George Haiel from Damascus, a graduate from the law college, was appointed cashier of the Syrian Parliament and later became cashier of the Syrian University. He was taken by the Ministry of Agrarian reforms, where he rose up to be its secretary general before going out on pension and then passing away.

Abou Nasser / Lawen

The history of this family was lost before they settled in Kfeir. It is presumed that they came to Kfeir about three hundred years ago. There is a branch of this family at the village of Ain el-Shaara in Syria and another at Kab Elias in Lebanon. The oldest known grandfathers of this family at Kfeir were Soulieman, Lawen, Metri and Farha Abou Nasser. They were weavers and farmers. When the exodus to the New World began, they were no exception, going to Brazil, Central America and the USA. The son of Iskander,

[32] In Ottoman times, a *kâim-makâm* was a state officer who was considered a representative of, or "standing in place" of the Sultan at a local level; today, a *kaymakam* is a representative of the government or state at a local level.

Farid went to the US. His sister, Farida, was once in charge of King Faysal's Palace while he was King of Syria and later went to the US. Soulieman, after earning a pension in the Lebanese Army, went to the West Indies and died there. Nicola went to Brazil. Fouad remained here. Nassif Abou Nasser died, leaving a few daughters and no sons. Elias had two boys: Ayoub and Toufick. Ayoub went to the US, returned home and passed away here. Toufick was a successful merchant in Huntington, West Virginia. Hannah and his family went to Brazil. Jirjis and his family went to the US.

At the turn of this century, the Lawen branch of this family had several men living at Kfeir, who were landowners, farmers and weavers. Ibrahim, Jirjis, Mikhail and Hannah all went to the US with their families. Yousef went to the US also but returned and died here. His sons live in Kfeir and Canada. Rashed Lawen was an intelligent, but blind man who ran a store, and sometimes peddled goods in his Kashi which he carried on his back throughout the village. One of his sons died in Saudi Arabia, the other is a merchant here.

Abou Rizk

The Abou Rizk family was once one of the largest families at Kfeir and one of its oldest settlers. Its men were tillers of the land, weavers, tradesmen and dyers.

The Abou Rizk family had a monopoly on the village supply of priests. For a considerable period, this office was a heredity prerogative of that family, from grandfather to father to son. Among the noted priests was Abdullah Sr. and Abdullah Jr. Another was Siman and his son. The priest Moses was a very famous man throughout the region for his bravery and physical strength. Travelling on a lonely road through a thick forest usually infested with highway men, it happened that three of them were on the road at that moment. Seeing the priest coming in their direction, their leader said, "Let us have some fun with the priest," and hid behind the bushes. His two mates came and stood on the road. As soon as the priest was close to them, one of them shouted, "Stick them up!" The priest, Moses, stood his ground and grinned sarcastically, keeping his long arms akimbo at his sides, made a step or two

forward until he was close to the bandit who came towards him first and said, "My son, you know that we priests are beggars! Let me go on my way in peace!" Saying this, he seized the first bandit by the neck with his left hand and with his right, he grabbed his left leg, raised him high above his head and hurled him against his mate and both fell to the ground like a ton of lead. Whereupon the third bandit gurgled raucously and rushed towards the priest saying, "Father, we bear you no malice. We were only trying to test your physical strength." Stretching forth his hand, he greeted the priest and both helped the two bandits to their feet. The last of the Abou Rizk priests at Kfeir was the late Mikhail, ordained in 1949. He passed away several years ago.

During the First World War (1914–1918) conditions on the coast of Lebanon became very difficult during the first two years of war, forcing the people to come toward the interior. Among these was the priest Habib Abou Rizk of Tyre and his family who came to Kfeir to stay. Elea, the priest Habib's older son, was of military age which forced him to remain in hiding, lest he be caught by the Turkish gendarmes and drafted to serve in the Turkish army. When the late Sherrif Hussain of Hijaz declared his revolt against the Turks, young men from Lebanon and Syria began to cross the desert to Hijaz. Among them was Elea, who became one of Amir Faysal's secretaries. Faysal was the Commander in Chief of the Arab Forces during that war. Elea remained fighting till the fall of Damascus. He duly went to Tyre and raised the Arab flag over its courthouse. He remained with Faysal, till the latter was driven out of Syria by the French. Elea went to Africa and began preaching Arab nationalism among Arab immigrants there, which made him a person *non grata* in the eyes of the colonial authorities. He passed away there, heroically unforgettable.

Another Elea, the son of the late priest, Simon (whose entire family went to Brazil), was a real Kfeirian patriot. When Faris El-Khoury reached world-wide fame at the United Nations, Elea, who was in Brazil, thought the Kfeirians in Brazil should make a statue of him to be erected in the public square of Kfeir. Toward this goal, he began preaching among his compatriots and after many difficulties he managed to assemble a good number of Kfeirians for a meeting in

the city of Sao Paulo to discuss ways and means of the project.

No sooner had Elea made his speech and declared his plans and intention than this patriotic priest stood up and declared that Faris El-Khoury was a Protestant and let the Protestant community of Kfeir build him a statue. Since Brazil was not as prosperous as it is today, the project ended. Elea went to his grave, with a pain in his heart and a fiasco in his mind!

Among those present was a priest whose father was also a priest from Kfeir. After finishing his studies at the Kfeirian school operated by Russian missionaries, the boy was taken to Palestine for higher studies and then to Russia to study to become a priest! But with the Bolshevik Revolution in Tsarist, Russia, our young man found himself like a soul astray on the outer rims of creation. He returned to Kfeir and since there was nothing for him to do here, he followed his elder brother to Brazil, finally became a priest there.

Abou Shalash

The Abou Shalash family came first to Kfeir from the Bekaa Plateau and the town of Kafr Dabash in Lebanon. They came here some nine hundred years ago and are credited with building the magnificent church we now have. They also supplied the church with eleven priests in succession. The men were nicknamed the nightingales of the church on account of their beautiful voices and their mastery of the Byzantine scale of church chanting, in which the church hymns are sung.

Of the Abou Shalash family, none now live at Kfeir, but in Damascus there are some dry goods merchants who say that their ancestors came from Kfeir.

Aboud

Some fifty years or more ago, the Aboud family came to Kfeir from the neighboring village of Dniebah, now called Marj-el-Zihour (the meadow of flowers). When life became rather hard on the two Christian houses at Dniebah, they came to Kfeir, where they have prospered, purchasing land and building homes. They have educated their children at the village school and some of their young men are now teachers at Kfeir's school.

Anbar

The Anbar family came to Kfeir from the village of Niha in the Chouf District of Mount Lebanon roughly one hundred and fifty years ago. The first of its men to settle at Kfeir was Nassif Hadad. Why they became Anbar instead of Hadad is unknown, perhaps Anbar was a nickname which surpassed Hadad. They did not own much land but lived as muleteers. Almost all its men migrated to Brazil and some to African countries. Others went to the Arabian Gulf States. Toufick and his family went to Brazil, as well as Anis, Saleem and others. Shakeeb is in the Lebanese Army while Adeeb and Labeeb are shopkeepers in Kfeir and Mikhail is a schoolteacher.

Awad-Khattib

The Awad-Khattib family was the first family to settle at Kfeir, some nine or ten hundred years ago. It is not known where they came from but it is presumed it was the Chouf District in Mount Lebanon. Here, they were religious leaders of their Druze community. They were farmers and claimed vast portions of the land around the village. They built their houses near the public square and the fountains on the site of Kfeir's ancient aristocracies' houses, as the remaining arches of their houses still stand.

When the Naufals came to Kfeir, a strong rivalry for the Druze leadership of the village began between them and the Awads. After a long period of disputes, the Naufals finally wrested the civil leadership from the Awads, but not the religious one. In fact, the Naufals were never religious leaders in their community.

Some members of this family went to the USA and never returned. Those at Kfeir are landowners and skilled laborers. Others are soldiers in the Lebanese Army. This family used to boast that none of its members ever entered a jail!

Aysami

The people of the village of Aysam, which sits on the foot of Mount Hermon on the Syrian side, are known as Baraghisha. They were strong and influential, but few in number. Near Aysam is the large village of Qal'at Jandal and between the people of these two villages there was once an open battle in which the Baraghisha

were defeated. To escape liquidation, they fled and sought refuge at Kfeir, Memiss and Hasbaya. Here, they became known as Aysamis, pertaining to the village from which they came. To Kfeir came Hamad and Salman. They first worked as muleteers for their Christian neighbors, who built them houses close to theirs. Later, they began to own land and became independent. Many of their men went to Brazil: some returned, others remained and passed away there. Another branch of the Aysami lives at Jabel Druze. They are to be found at the village of Raha, Kanawat and Metan. Now three houses only of this family are in Kfeir.

Bassett

The Bassett family had a record dated in 1870 telling their history at Kfeir and Kab-Elias, Damascus, Rashaya el-Foukhar, Deir Mimass, Jabel el-Druze, Egypt and a number of other places in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. This history was lost during the Druze-Christian wars of 1840 and 1860 when dozens of churches were set ablaze and destroyed.

The late Abdullah Bassett[33] of Kfeir tried to collect as much information as possible about the history of his family from his father and uncles. He was around eighty years old when he wrote the following: "The origin of the Bassett Family was the town of Tipshsar in the Kerswan district of Mount Lebanon. They came to Kfeir some four hundred years ago and began their lives as weavers, farmers and merchants. From Kfeir they spread out to Kab-Elias, Rashaya el-Foukhar in the District of Hasbaya, Damascus, Houran in Syria, Malah in Jabel Druze and Kafir Yassif in Palestine. They also went to Egypt."

"In Kfeir, they first settled in a compound in the center of the village a little above the main street which may have been a wide boulevard in ancient times." The area which this compound occupied was a large one. Judging by the smoothly dressed stones, arches and pillars of their ancient houses, one can safely say that they were rich and powerful men in their community. The house of Abou Mulhim Bassett in the center of the village with its arches,

[33] Abdullah produced an extensive genealogy of four Al-Bassit clans, which has been recorded by Abe J. Bassett and entered into his Ancestry files. The genealogy file is open for inspection and perusal.

pillars and large size two-story structure of well-dressed stones mimics a small palace. They owned some of the richest and most fertile spots of land at Kfeir.

Of their known branches who later lived outside the compound, was the Kaboosh branch, who built their houses east of the Public Square. The Abou Nassar, who went below the public fountain to build their homes. The Abbas branch went about one hundred yards to the east of the compound and built their homes. The Yousef branch went to the southeast of the Abou Rizk quarter and built their houses there. Another went to the west of Abou Rizk.

In Damascus, there are two branches of this family: one is known as Shamandi and the other as Bassett. Dr. Mikhail Shamandi became the dean of the Medical College at the Syrian University of Damascus. Other Shamandis were traders who dealt with the Druze and Bedouins of Southern Syria. The house of Bassett in Damascus were merchants and skilled laborers. Those of Houran and Jabel El-Druze were landowners and owned sheep in the desert. There is a branch of this family at Kafr Yassif village in Palestine. The one at Rashaya El-Fourkhar produced a dentist who lived in Beirut and worked there. The Touma branch at Kab Elias are merchants, manufacturers and landowners.

Some members of this family were outstanding men in their days. Dr. Sabir graduated from the American University of Beirut and spent all his life in Cairo, where he died. Tanal, son of Abou Mulhim Bassett, was a famous musician who played the oud and served as an officer in the Turkish army. He passed away at the house of his friend, Amir Faour, Chief of the Fadil tribes in the Houlan area of southwestern Syria. Among these famous men were also Abou Mulhim and Abdullah, who were the oldest men in the family. Abdullah was very fond of reading history and was happy to relate historical events. He was one of the few Christian men who escaped assassinations at Hasbaya during the bloody massacres of the Christians in 1860. Nicola went to the USA but returned here. He had sons who went to America with some dying here and others there. The living which are known to the author are Philip of Huntington, West Virginia and his cousin, Solomon of Toledo, Ohio.

At Kfeir, Nassif Abou Nassar Basset became the town Mukhtar

for a good number of years and his son, the late Mikhail, was the telephone operator and the municipal secretarial clerk. Nabih went to the USA and studied mechanical engineering in Toledo, Ohio; and his brother, Hafiz, is a successful merchant there also.

Jirjis and his brother, John, lived at St Albans, West Virginia all their lives. Nassib, one of Jirjis' boys, graduated from West Point Military Academy and served as an officer on the staff of General McArthur during the 2nd World War on the Asiatic Front. His brothers, Adeeb and Nasseb, are merchants in West Virginia. They were born at St. Albans in the same state where their Uncle John lived. Nassif Bassett, son of Mikhail, died in Charleston, West Virginia. His brother, Soulieman, went to Africa. During an Israeli raid on the town, Kamal Bassett, son of Mikhail Kaboosh Bassett, had both hands cut off and now he is living without hands. Yet, the Palestinian commandos pay him a monthly salary.

After selling their property here to members of the Tweel family, Joseph Bassett and his cousins migrated to the USA. Their large houses were in the southern section of the town, overlooking the green valley below. They are now in ruins. Joseph's sons, Ibrahim, Slaiman and Faris lived in West Virginia, Ohio and Michigan.

Abdullah went to Kfar Yasif in Palestine where his descendants are thriving as Arab-Israelis. Nimer was the well-respected town mayor as is his wife and daughters for their support of pro-Israeli-Arab and pro-Palestinian initiatives. And those who went to Damascus, George and Issa, were tailors. In 1870, a Bassett and two sons left Kfeir to settle in Jabel Druze where they have thrived. The Bassetts of Kab-Elias are merchants, craftsmen and traders.

After graduating from the American University of Beirut, Dr. Sabir Bassett of Kfeir's branch went to Cairo to live there. Tanal Bassett was a high-ranking officer in the Turkish Army and an excellent Oudist. Ibrahim and Abdullah were important men in their time and Abdullah was fortunate enough to escape being killed during the Christian massacres of 1860 at Hasbaya. There are some members of this family in Brazil about whom none of us know a thing.

In the USA and Canada, some of the Bassett men have done things worth mentioning. Ibrahim of Williamson, Elias of Welch

and Moses of Napoleon were among the first pioneers to work for the creation of the Kfeirian Reunion Organization. Clement Bassett, son of Eli, was slated to become the governor of the state of West Virginia before his premature death. His brother, Eli Jr., was a prominent professor at the extension of Maryland University in West Germany. Dewey Bassett, son of Moses, was a high-ranking officer in the US Army during the Second World War. Colonel Nassib of West Point was a member of General McArthur's staff in the Pacific Front during World War Two.

The word "Kaboosh" is not a family name, far from it; it is either a nickname or a proper noun, having nothing to do with the genealogy of the Bassetts. Even in the Arab world, sometimes the nickname surmounts the original family name through usage, and its bearer becomes known by it. For example, Kasir (short), Taweel (tall), Asmar (brown), etc.

Bolus

The origin of this family is not clear. They may be a branch of the Haj or Abou Shalash or Abou Shawel or their neighbors, the Mikhails. The Bolus family went to Tyre seeking refuge after the bloody religious wars of 1860. Some of them returned to Kfeir when conditions improved, others remained in Tyre. The last two men to dwell at Kfeir were Mikhail and Sa'id, they were brothers. Mikhail lived almost all his life at Tyre while Sa'id lived at Kfeir and the USA where he passed away.

The Bolus family has been famous in producing poets. Mikhail was able to improvise in colloquial Arabic all night long. His nephew Colonel John, an assistant Military Attaché at the US Embassy in Beirut was an accomplished poet by the age of sixteen; he was able to improvise poetry at an astonishing speed. Kamil, the son of Mikhail, is a noted poet in classical Arabic. So was the late Joseph, brother to John.

Their father, Sa'id, was very fond of owning thoroughbred Arabian horses. Before going to America, his stable always had three or four heads of that vanishing aristocratic Arabian breed.

Demashki

About three hundred years ago, the Demashki family came to Kfeir from Damascus. The name Demashki derives from Damascus.

The family were not large landowners nor herders, but good and peaceful citizens. About a hundred years ago, almost all its men migrated to North and South America; some remained there, and others returned here, getting married, and building houses. This family has a strong inclination to educate its children. Almost all their young men are now soldiers in the Lebanese Army and some in the Police Force. Australia has lured some of the Demashki young men. Souhail, a college graduate, is the secretary general of the College of Science and Literature of the Lebanese University. Mohammad is a dentist at Kfeir. Hatim is a promising civil engineer now working in Beirut.

Fakhoury

The Arabic word "Fakhoury" means a potter and this family earned this name because its men were skilled in pottery making. They came to Kfeir from the village of Aytha el-Foukhar in the district of Rashaya, the inhabitants of which live on pottery products. Before coming to Aytha el-Foukhar, history relates that this family came from Arabia. They came to Kfeir some four hundred years ago and settled in the center of the village near the Bassetts. The Fakhoury family, the Ghanttous and Ansara are all cousins. From Kfeir, the Fakhoury family or some of its men, went to Memiss, to Damascus and to El-Salett in Jordan.

At the beginning of this century, there were several houses of the Fakhoury family at Kfeir. There was the house of Shukrallah, the house of Yousef, the Elias, Oukyl, Salem and Francis. The Shukrallah grandson sold his house here and now lives in one of the Arabian Gulf States. The Israelis destroyed the house of Yousef when they entered the village several years ago. The house of Salem was rebuilt by Yacoub, his son, before he passed away. Elias' children had all gone to the USA. Oukyl's went to Damascus and Houran and one of his grandchildren, Michael, became a supreme court judge there. Francis' children went to Brazil and contact with them has been lost.

Of the known offspring of Soulieman are Valdamir and his

brother, Ayoub, now living in California.

Years ago, one of the Fakhoury young men embraced Islam and was named Mamdouh. Later, while in the service of the Turkish Sultan, he was given the title of "Pasha," a title usually given to generals. He died in Istanbul, leaving a large family but large wealth. Incidentally, late in the last century, Jabel Druze in Syria revolted against the Turkish rule. The Sultan prepared a large, punitive army under the leadership of a certain Mamdouh Pasha and sent it to subdue the Druze. History describes Mamdouh Pasha as a lewd, ruthless and bloodthirsty leader. Was he the young Fakhoury man who embraced Islam? It is hard to tell.

Ghattas

Ibrahim Ghattas, better known as "The Homsi," pertaining to the city of Homs in Syria from where he came to Kfeir, many years ago. Although he lived in Kfeir all his life, mystery shrouds his vital details. He never returned to Homs and not any of his relatives there, if he had any, came to see him here. The only person who claimed relation to Ibrahim Ghattas in later years, was Albert Ghattas of Cairo, Egypt. He was married here at Kfeir and his wife gave birth to several children who were all married to Kfeirians and Jordanians here and abroad. Ibrahim Ghattas was a shopkeeper and a horseshoer of excellent skill.

Ghanttous-Ansara

It is assumed that the origin of these two families goes back to an ancient Arabian tribe of Kahtan of Yemen in Southern Arabia, which was forced to migrate from its land there after the breakdown of the huge Ma'rib Dam[34] which flooded the whole countryside.

[34] Near the ancient city of Marib, in Yemen, lies the ruins of a great dam. Considered to be one of the biggest engineering wonders of the ancient world, the Great Dam of Marib stretched for 580 meters and was easily one of the largest dams of its era. For as long as it stood, the Great Dam turned the desert into an oasis allowing the irrigation of more than a hundred square kilometers of sandy soil centered around Marib, which was then the largest city in southern Arabia. When the dam collapsed in the 6th century, it brought down this ancient commercial empire. The collapse of the Great Dam and the destruction of Marib was such an important event in the history of the region that it even finds a place in the Koran.

Following the Moslem conquest of the Middle East, some of the Kahtan clans, known by the name of Ansara, migrated to Majdal Anjar in the Bekaa plateau of Lebanon and the neighboring village of Aytha el-Foukhar. Other clans went to Syria, Jordan and Iraq. A number of these clans embraced Islam and others remained Christians. From the Ansara clan, as presumed, several houses sprang up, such as Fakhoury, Kasis, Francis and Ghanttous. It has been claimed that the first Ghanttous was a prince in the days of a Roman Emperor called an Arabic Herkal. In fact, all the Roman emperors were called Herkals by the ancient Arab historians. It is also claimed that his seat was in Kfeir and that he was a powerful man, socially and religiously. The Ghanttous and Ansara houses at Kfeir are situated above the large public square, near the water. From the old Ghanttous posterity we have the following names: Ghanttous and his sons, Metri, Ziyad, Mulhim and Nicola. Nothing is known about Metri or Ziyad and it is thought that they embraced Islam and were lost in the far-flung Arabian Empire. Nicola lived at Kfeir and it had been related that he was friendly with the Amir—the ruling Shaihabi Prince at Rashaya. His several children are Boutros, Hannah, Soulieman, Yousef and Simaan. Boutros went to North America and no one knows a thing about the other children except Simaan who remained at the village and worked as a weaver and improvised poetry in free verse. He had two sons: Bishara who went to Cuba and died there, and Nicola who served in the Lebanese Army and reached the rank of a Sergeant Major before going on pension. He lived all his life at Jdeidat Marj-Ayoun and passed away there. His youngest son was severely wounded when the Israelis shelled Jdeidet. He was taken to a hospital in Israel where he remained several months, before recovering. The family then immigrated to the USA where the elder brothers lived.

Very little is known about the house of Ansara. At the beginning of this century, the Ansara family migrated to Brazil where, in time, the two boys did well. Camille or Camilio became one of the leading merchants in Sao Paulo and head of the chamber of commerce. His brother became a prominent lawyer.

Gharzudin

This small Druze family came to Kfeir Ras el-Maten in Lebanon some one hundred fifty years ago. The first man to come was Najem with no money in his possession to buy land. The early men became the village cowherds and they were good herders and laborers.

When the people of Wadi Taym, Chouf of Lebanon and Aklim El-Lalan in Syria began their move to Jabel Druze in Syria, it was inhabited by nomadic tribes of the desert. Some of the Gharzudin men went there, some went to Palestine, while others went to places in Lebanon.

At the present, the house of Hussain is still at Kfeir and his sons are well-to-do, while their uncle Jamil and his family live at Dhour el-Showeir in Lebanon.

Ghiz, MacCarious, Junied, Nassour

The root of MacCarious, Junied and Nassour families is Ghiz. They came to Kfeir some two hundred fifty years ago from the city of Ghaza in Palestine, and perhaps Ghiz is an off shoot of Ghaza! Other members of this family migrated to places besides Kfeir. The Ghiz men were skilled in making pottery, building their workshops on the western side of the village. This industry flourished at Kfeir for a good number of years until the beginning of this century when migration and keen competition killed it completely, at which time many their men migrated to the USA, Brazil and Canada. The Nassour and Junied branches no longer exist at Kfeir, but three houses of MacCarious and two of Ghiz remain here. It seems that Canada has absorbed many the Ghiz family. These men who had gone there are: Danial, Elias, Assad, Khalil, Attallah, (whose son, Joseph, recently became the governor of the province of Prince Edward Island [1986–1993]), George, Nassif, Elias, Ayoub, Hannah, Yousef, Abdullah, Jirjis, Habib, Mansour, Nimeh and Soulieman.

Brazil and the USA have also absorbed almost all the MacCarious men and a few Junieds. Of the known men who had gone to Brazil are Jirjis Abou Assali, Adeeb, Mulhim, Nicola Abou Abssi, Toufick, Eid Kamil and his brother and all the children of Habib MacCarious. To the USA are Nassif, Hannah and Adeeb, also Saleem and Nicola, Soulieman, Junied and Mikhail Farah Ghiz.

These four families owned good pieces of land and olive orchards which were either sold or left in the hands of distant relatives.

Sa'id Kamil Ghiz is a well-educated young man and an able teacher at government schools in Beirut. He had shared in writing some history textbooks for Lebanese schools and translated some literary books from French to Arabic.

The Haj (a)

The author had a difficult time trying to gather information and historical data about the Haj family of Kfeir, yet a large quarter of the village, to the northwest of the church, is still known by the name of the Haj Quarter. It consists of about ten houses, most of which are now in ruins, except for the one built by the late Mikhail Haj. Judging by circumstantial evidence, the Haj family must be one of the earliest families to settle at Kfeir, judging by the rough stones with which their houses were built.

It has been an established mark of distinction in the Middle East among Christians and Moslem to call every man who goes on a pilgrimage to either Jerusalem or Mecca, a Haj and the woman, a Haji. We believe that the word "Haj" was not the original family name and that the present day Hajs may be a branch of their neighboring families such as Abou Shalash, Abou Shawl, or others.

The men of this family were not farmers and large landowners but traders and skilled weavers who never ventured far away from their quarter. It has been humorously said that many of their men lived all their lives without even reaching the public square, about one half mile east of their houses!

America and Brazil have absorbed the bulk of this family's men. In recent years, Canada has lured three of Shawki Haj's boys who are living there except for one who is currently working with the American oil companies in Saudi Arabia.

The Haj (b)

This new Haj family in Kfeir is not related to the original one of the village. Some sixty years ago or more, when the Tsarist Russian was sponsoring the Orthodox schools in the area, there came to Kfeir a young Palestinian teacher from the village of

Bekaa by the name of Siman Haj. He was a second-class teacher. When World War I broke out in 1914, he remained at Kfeir but the schools were closed forcing parents to begin teaching their children at their expense.

Siman remained here and taught school. After the war, it was easy to go to Cuba and Siman was one of those unfortunate youngsters who went there, passing away only a few years after his arrival. Before going to Cuba, he had married Hilane MacCarious, a village girl whose brothers had gone to America while she was living in Kfeir with her mother. Siman had two boys and a girl. Joseph is a schoolteacher here and the other son is in Brazil. The girl is married and lives in Brazil. Makram, son of Joseph, studied medicine at the AUB, then went to the United States for his post-graduate studies. He was fourth in his class. Some years ago, he was ordained a priest, serving in various places, chiefly Tyre and Keserwan.

Halabi

The Halabi family is one of the largest Druze families in the village. About two hundred years ago, four brothers came to Kfeir from the town Kifteen, near Aleppo in Syria. In time, this family of Hussain, Hassan, Ahmad Yousef, increased in number and some of them migrated to Jabel Druze, where several villages are now inhabited solely by Halabis. These villages are Walgha, Lahthy, Hazem and Thaaly. From Kfeir, they also went to villages in the districts of Hasbaya and Rashaya.

Ever since their coming to Kfeir, the Halabi men were goatherders and farmers; they never were tradesmen and merchants and they had seldom educated their children. Now the case is entirely different and they educate their children to high standards. Three of their young men are now teachers at the local school, while another two are doctors in Germany and the USA as reported.

The men of the Halabi family have migrated to the USA, Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Jordan where one of them, Mohammad Zedine, was made a Pasha by the late King Abdullah of that country. Many of their young men are now soldiers and non-commissioned officers in the Lebanese Army.

Hamdan

This Druze family has always been a family of goatherders, which they have practiced ever since their coming to Kfeir some two hundred years ago. It is believed that they came to Kfeir from the Chouf District in Lebanon because they have some relatives there, among them is the famous poet in colloquial verse, Talih Hamdan.

At the turn of the century, there were three brothers at Kfeir, Ali, Ismail and Kassim. Kassim did not have any boys, Ali and Isamil did and their children followed their fathers' footsteps in raising goats but their grandchildren Munif, Ismail and Salima took a different course, the course of education, one of whom is now a college graduate.

Hannah

It is not known when or from where the Hannah family came to Kfeir. However, it is known that it is one of the oldest families to settle here. The oldest known men of this family were three brothers: Makhoul, Faris and Yousef and a cousin of theirs known by the name of Shamas.

Makhoul and Faris went to Damascus and became known as Daabous and Eid. Others went to other parts of Lebanon and Palestine and their histories were lost.

In later years, many in this family went to Brazil including Saleem, Toufic, Faris and Yousef, while to the United States went Mansour and Mousa. Elias Hannah and his family also went to the USA. Almost all their property here has been sold, except for the house of Abdullah, which is in ruins.

Hawarni

The origin of the Hawarni family is Houran in Syria. They came here over a hundred years ago and settled around the public fountain and above the water spring known as "fawara." They were weavers and muleteers. The early known fathers of this family were MacCarious, Metri, Touma and Faris. Many of their children lately migrated abroad, some to Africa, some to the USA. Abdullah was noted for the expenses of oil painting the walls of the church. Metri, the son of Tutfallah, went to Brazil. His son was chosen as a model

for making a statue for the perfection of physical culture.

Touma Hawarni gave birth to Habib who went to Jdeidat Marj-Ayoun and lived there all his life. Melhim of their offspring lived also at Jdeidat Marj-Ayoun and left a large family of children who possess excellent voices and live now in Beirut.

A few years ago, Yousef Abou Hawarni was one of the oldest living men in the village before his death. He was over one hundred years old.

Indraous

The Indraous came to Kfeir from Rashaya El-Wadi and that was about one hundred fifty years ago. The first to come was Habib who became a farmer and at the proper time he purchased some property and built a house. This family did not increase in the village on account of migration. Almost all the children of Habib and Yousef Indraous are in Brazil except Saleem who is still here and has no children, but a girl.

Jana

The Jana family has been one of the smallest families in the village. Their houses are in the Haj quarter, and whether they are an off shoot of the Haj or Abou Shalash is not known as there is no record whatsoever of this family. Those here who are alive know nothing about their roots.

As early as the beginning of this century, there were two brothers of the Jana family at Kfeir: they were Jirjis and Hannah. During the First World War, because of famine and hardship, they migrated to Houran. When the war ended, Hannah remained there and passed away. His children and grandchildren are now living there and in Damascus. Jirjis returned to Kfeir and passed away here, leaving two boys who are living at the village in their modern houses. They are experts in bee breeding of which the village is now rich.

Julian El-Khoury

It has been said that the origin of this family goes back to the Haj family. Whether true or not, none of this family now live in

Kfeir. It may be Haj because their house is in the center of the Haj section. Once, a member of this family became a priest (Khoury) and his offspring adopted the religious title as the family name, calling themselves El-Khoury to distinguish them from other Khouries in the village. Julian was an able stonemason in his days and people boasted that Julian built their houses. He had three boys who immigrated to the United States. They were Ibrahim, Elias and Abdullah. There, they became prosperous merchants. Elias and Abdullah visited the village after World War II and then returned to the States. They donated funds for building a stone wall around Kfeir's graveyard. Also, at their expense, they printed the New Testament, distributing it throughout the Orthodox Church. They were decorated by high church officials in Damascus as well as in Jerusalem. A branch of this family lives in Damascus and is successful in the dry goods business.

Kassab

Ever since its coming to Kfeir some 150 years ago, this family has been a one man's family, or a one-house family. When the time came for its members to increase, the road to the New World was open and its men, Faris and Yousef, were attracted. However, Faris died early and Yousef, after giving birth to two boys and three girls, went to the USA, returning after World War I. He and his wife were killed at their home by robbers. Toufick, the eldest son of Yousef, went to the USA and took charge of his father's store there. He died there several years ago. Before his death, Yousef built, in the village, a motorized wheat crusher and an olive presser, now run by his son, Salim.

Khirbawi

The Khirbawi family is an old Kfeirian family. Before coming hither several hundred years ago, it is thought they lived in the village of Khirbi in Houran. There are several villages in that area by the name Khirbi or Kharaba such as Khirbit Ghazaali, Kharaba, Khirbit Rouha and Khirbit Kanafar in Lebanon and many others.

The Khirbawi family were noted for producing priests who served at Kfeir and other towns. There was the Priest Yousef who

was the priest of Hasbaya for a good number of years and later of Kfeir until his death. Another Khirbawi priest who spent all his life in the service of God was the scholarly Basilious of Saint Nicholas Church of Brooklyn, New York. He was an able public speaker and a noted historian who wrote and published "The History of the USA," "The History of the Syrian Migration to the USA," "The History of Saint George," "The History of Russia" and other works. These books were written in Arabic. One of the sons of the Priest Yousef became a priest in Brazil. The Farah Khirbawi house men went to the USA and never returned; their houses here were recently sold.

El-Khoury

Some five or six hundred years ago, a priest by the name of Jirjis Abou Kawook came to Kfeir from Damascus, his coming ordained by the Patriarch. The ancient story goes on to say that the Priest Jirjis was a Grecian nobleman who was bringing a shipload of valuable goods from Greece to Lebanon. Before reaching the rocky Lebanese shores, a violent storm struck the ship and the strong winds drifted it aimlessly to the shore, where it wrecked and foundered. Jirjis escaped death by swimming to shore. Seeing that no help would come to him from the Beiruti people, he sought the Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus who, seeing how intelligent and handsome this young man was, duly ordained him a priest. After training him for some time, he was sent to Kfeir because from time immemorial, the village had been under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch in Damascus.

As the years rolled on, the name "Kawook" gave way to Khoury and the family has been known by this name ever since. The house of the priest Jirjis in the center of the Abou Jamra quarter is one of the largest, if not the largest, in the village. It is about 27 yards from south to north and about 15 yards from east to west, all under one single roof. Jirjis was the only priest to come out of the Khoury family.

About one hundred fifty years ago, Jabour, the grandfather of Faris the Great, was a very capable man, brave and daring, who rode the Hyena from Hasbani River source to his house in Kfeir, over six miles. He and his cousin Abou Samra were among the Lebanese notable's cavalcade which went down to Acre under the

leadership of the Amir Kasim, son of Bashir the Great, and met Napoleon. Jabour was also his village's unofficial Justice of the Peace, as well as its doctor who invented his own surgical tools and performed minor operations sans anesthesia. He also taught himself how to read and write.

One time at church and after the mass, he walked to the deacon's desk and, taking a prayer book, began to read, pleased with himself. Suddenly a hand slapped his neck violently. He looked sharply around and there he saw the priest standing behind him roaring like an ill-natured camel: "These books are not for common laymen to read!"

Jabour did not answer, but made a wry face and thought, "The sect which forbids its members from reading its books shall never be mine!" He left the church and never went back to it, but rode his mare, carried his sword and went to the county seat to change his sect from Orthodox to Protestant. It was thought that he was the first Christian in Lebanon, or Syria, to become a Protestant.

The Naufal family of Kfeir was the leading Druze family not only at Kfeir but in the district also. In such large families there are always rivalries about the leadership among its men. In the days of Yacoub El-Khoury, two brothers, Hamad and Mohammad, were always disputing and sometimes quarreling among each other for the same purpose. One time they engaged in a pitched battle and the people of the village rushed to separate them, which they succeeded in doing without any harm to each other. Once disengaged, Mohammad shouted threateningly, "I'll show you what I'll do!"

That evening, Mohammad went to visit his friend, Yacoub, who had heard of the quarrel but did not go.

"I heard shouting at your quarter, what was going on?" asked Yacoub.

"Oh, nothing, I only quarreled with my brother, Hamad!" answered Mohammad.

"Was that all?" asked Yacoub. "What did you tell him?" he asked seriously.

"Only told him that I'll show him what I shall do!" replied Mohammad.

"This threat is going to cost you one month's stay at night at the

riverbank in the land your brother just planted with olive saplings," said Yacoub. "Carry your shotgun and go at once."

A little after sunset, Mohammad went down to the riverbank and hid at the entrance to the olive grove among the bushes. Around midnight a bright Lebanese moon rose over the towering summits of Mount Hermon to the east. Mohammad was awake; he remained attentive, suddenly he heard footsteps coming in his direction. He clutched on the trigger of his gun. Soon he saw the silhouette of a man and held his breath. The man reached to the first olive tree and with one stroke of his axe, cut it down.

"Stick them up!" roared Mohammad, jumping to the man, pointing the muzzle of his gun towards his head. Frightened to death, the man was mute as a rock. Mohammad ordered him to turn around and walk before him and the man did as ordered. Mohammad ordered him to throw down his axe, which he did, and Mohammad picked it up.

Finally, they reached the village and went straight to Hamad's house. Mohammad knocked at the gate. After a while Hamad's was asking who it was, and Mohammad told him. Hamad told him that he had enough bother from him during the day and he was not ready to open the door for him at that late hour of night to have more headache. At this point, Hamad's wife came up and said that she was going to open the door for Mohammad, but Hamad brushed her aside and opened the door. Whereupon Mohammad kicked his prisoner inside and told his brother what had happened. Infuriated, Hamad shouted, "And you brought him to me alive?" He ordered his wife to bring him a rope and fettered the man till sunrise when, before the people of the village, the culprit received a sole-slashing bastinado and ordered to leave the village forever.

Jabour's children were Abdullah and Yacoub whose histories are treated elsewhere in this study.

Lakees

This family has also been a one house, one man's family at the village. Their origin is not known but their house was among the Haj houses. At the present, none of its members live at Kfeir. They moved to Beirut several years ago. The only known Lakees was

Faris, the oldest man of this family, who was rather poor and doing odd jobs here and there. His son, Eid, was entirely different and an ambitious young man. He was a hard worker who was not satisfied with his old peoples' scanty life at the village. He moved to Beirut where he raised a good family and was able to educate them all. His son, Antoine, is an excellent engineer.[35]

Malaab

This one house, one man's family is not known from where and when it came to Kfeir. The last of its men was Elias who was the village crier and passed away some sixty years ago, leaving behind three daughters. Two of them are now dead and one is living in Beirut.

Marji, Maalouf, Amar

About two hundred years ago, the Marji family came to Kfeir from the village of Kafr Akab in Lebanon where they were known as Maalouf. Why they became Marji at Kfeir is not known. The last of the Marji men to live at Kfeir were Jahjan, Yousef and Ibrahim. They were muleteers who travelled from Damascus to Kfeir and then to Jerusalem. None of the children of Jahjan and Yousef remained at Kfeir; they all migrated to the New World with their relative, Assad, whose family went to Brazil. Ibrahim remained at Kfeir and was married twice: from his first wife he had two daughters, who are now in Canada. From his second wife, who he married at the age of eighty years, he had two healthy boys and a girl. One of the boys is in Canada and the other is in the Gulf States. The girl is married and lives at her father's house.

Once in Damascus, the author was buying some copper and brass articles from a shop. Looking up, he saw a sign on which was written "Kfeiri Brothers." I asked the merchant from which Kfeir they came from. He proudly said that they came from the same Kfeir his Excellency Faris Bey El-Khoury came. Smiling, I told the man that at Kfeir there is not a family by that name and introduced myself. He said that his ancestors, who belong to the Marji family, came to Damascus from Kfeir during the religious war and remained here, known as Kfeiris.

The Maalouf branch of the Marji family that went to Jdeidat,

[35] The story of Antoine Lakees is presented in Chapter 20.

Marj-Ayoun living there under the name of Maalouf. The founder of this branch was Mulhim whose children are now in Damascus, Brazil, Marj-Ayoun and other places.

The Amar branch, who were stone masons, took their family name from their profession. They were summoned to Marj-Ayoun to build the Orthodox Church and remained there. From Kfeir and Jdeidat Marj-Ayoun, the Amar branch went to Haifa in Palestine, Majdal Shamis in Syria and the village of Joubatha. They also went to Tripoli, Beit Shabab in Lebanon, the USA and many other places in this world.

Mikhail

The house of Isbir, the house of Radwan, the house of Eid, the house of Candis, the house of Jirji, the house of Deeb and Salamara and the house of Khawaja all belong to the Mikhail family. It has said that Greece was the origin of this family. The story goes on to say that the King of Greece had a brother by the name of Mikhailidis who aspired to the throne. The king sent some men to kill Mikhailidis who, learning of the plot, left the country before he was assassinated. He came to Lebanon and landed in Beirut some three hundred years ago. After spending all his money, for some reason or another, he went to the village of Tibshar in Kissirwan District and lived there. Here he became the father of three sons whose names were Sarkis, Candis and Mikhail, Jr. A famine struck Kissirwan and the Mikhailidis family was forced to search for a new place to settle. It must be remembered that some of the Bassetts had migrated from Tibshar to Kfeir before the Mikhails had come. Having relatives at Tibshar, the Bassetts used to visit each other. At that time, it was very easy to own land around Kfeir since the hills and mountains around the village were a dense forest and all one had to do was to claim, clear and develop plots. Encouraged by the presence of their Bassett neighbors at Tibshar, the Mikhail branch came to Kfeir first, followed by the Candis. The Mikhails began their life at Kfeir as dyers after which they began to acquire land by either claim or purchase.

Not long afterwards, a quarrel between the Bassetts and the Mikhails took place and the Mikhails asked for help from their

relatives who remained at Tibshar. Instead of an open battle, a peace was arranged between the two families. The Mikhails aspired to the leadership of the Christian community of the village, which they were able to grasp in the days of Isbir.

By and by, the Mikhails increased in number and with the assistance of the powerful Druze family of Naufal, who saw in them a reliable ally, they were able to purchase from the Shiites the rich farms of Ain Fijour with its abundance of water, west of the village and across the Fatir River. This purchase took place around 1860 and it increased the wealth of the Mikhails, who all these years, besides their houses, did not own but a few stretches of land within the jurisdiction of the village.

The Mikhails were noted for their intelligence and generosity and in time they became leaders of their community. This took place in the days of Isbir, who had three sons, Ibrahim, Hannah and Soulieman. Ibrahim had two sons: Khalil and Kamil, the first died young while Kamil went to the USA, married and died there. He married his cousin, Nazik, the daughter of Soulieman, and had a daughter with her. Hannah was the first Kfeirian to migrate to the USA. On his first trip, he took five men on his expense. After five years he returned and now took fourteen on his expense. He had three boys and a girl.

Isbir went to the States and passed away there. He was married and had a charming and intelligent daughter, Diana, who followed the road of learning and obtained a long list of college degrees and doctorates in various studies, longer than Colonel Burke's Peerage.[36] Now she travels and lectures throughout Europe and Turkey.

Toumeh is in Brazil, Fouad is in Kfeir and Beirut. His sons are mentioned elsewhere in this book. Soulieman was a real leader and very intelligent. He had four boys and three girls. Three of the boys passed away and one is alive, he is Hasseeb, a retired lawyer. The girls are three, two are here, one married, the other lives with her brother and the third is in the USA.

The house of Radwan's men went to Damascus and became merchants. One house of this branch left Kfeir for the USA and

[36] Burke's Peerage was established by John Burke in London in 1826 during the reign of King George IV. Since then, it has become the definitive guide to the genealogy and heraldry of historical families worldwide.

Brazil, passing away there. The Deeb house went to Palestine and became well-to-do citizens. The Jirji house went to Brazil and vanished. Three men of the Candis house went to America and one remained here, Nimeh, whose son, Shehadi, is treated in this study. The Khawaja branch went to the USA, Canada and the West Indies. The house of Eid had two brothers: Nassif and Habib, who had two sons each and who went to the USA and were swallowed up in that stormy environment along with their children and grandchildren. The Salamara branch went to Marj-Ayoun and has remained there.

Musa El-Khoury

This is another one of those one man's families. They never had more than one man and several girls. Before becoming Khoury, they were known as Corolos. Where and when they came from no one knows, yet the name sounds Latin. The only thing known about them is that they are Catholic and once upon a time one of their men became a priest (a "khoury") and so they became known as the Musa El-Khoury family to distinguish them from other Khouries in the village. They have always been farmers and landowners. Tomeh, the last of this family, is now a schoolteacher at the local school.

Najad

The Najad family came to Kfeir from the town of Kiftin in northern Syria near Aleppo. The first two men of this family to come from Kiftin came to Ain Zhalta in the Chouf District of Lebanon some four hundred years ago. The names of these two men were Matter and Eid. From Ain Zhalta, some men of this family came to Niha, also in the Chouf District. About three hundred years ago, the Mattar branch came to Kfeir and spread out to several places such as Jabel Druze, Palestine and Lebanon again. Khadaj went to Kafr Mata in Lebanon, Assaf and Najad, later went to Jabel Druze, while Alyan went to Palestine. Najad remained at Kfeir and his family adopted his name and is still known by that name. The Najads are a peaceful family. They own land and in the past, some of them were goatherders. Several years back some Najads went to Brazil but did not prove good merchants and came back. Now they go to Saudi Arabia and Jordan and work as skilled laborers. They

educate their children, who are always first in their classes. Hail is a teacher at the local school while Najim is the Druze's Imam.

Naufal

Some 400 years ago, this family came to Kfeir from Deir Hita in Jabel Druze because the surrounding Moslem villages did not approve of the Druze presence. In such a situation, disputes and sometimes quarrels are likely to happen. Once, when the Naufal men were outside their village, their Moslem neighbors took advantage of their absence to attack the Naufal village. The Turkish Army interceded to the benefit of the Moslem villages, routing the Naufals causing them to scatter into many places. Some went to Rhybeh, east of Damascus on the fringes of the Syrian Desert and there, they embraced Islam and lived there, carrying the same name. Others went to other parts of Jabel Druze; these were two brothers, Amer and Naufal. When Naufal died, Amer became the head of the family and his descendants kept his name and became known as Amers. The Naufal's posterity kept the name of Naufal and the first man to come to Kfeir was Ali, accompanied by many cousins and their families. Accustomed to being leaders, the Naufals found it hard to be under the shaikh-ship of the Awad-Khattib family. What followed was a long rivalry between the two families, until finally, the Naufals prevailed. This change came in the days of Ismail Naufal, father of Hamad, who was one of the most prominent men in the region.

After the death of Ismail, his son Hamad became the leader. He was a very intelligent man, brave and well liked. He was able to solve problems and settle disputes and arrange peace between fighting families or villages. In this context, he often was called upon to settle feuds between people from Palestine, Jabel Druze, Syria and Lebanon. He was a gifted unofficial supreme judge. He refused to be employed by the Turks during the days of Midhat Pasha, the Turkish Governor of Syria. After the Christian massacres of 1860 and those before, he was exiled to Istanbul, but returned, passing away in Kfeir.

Hamad had several sons. The oldest was Ismail, whose mother was divorced and her children disinherited. The other sons were

Saleem, Kanj, Sa'id, Ameen, Nouman and Soulieman. Saleem became the Druze representative at the Turkish Administration in Damascus. His brother, Knaj, became the Druze chief in his absence. He died very young, leaving a single son, who went to Brazil and is still there. After Kanj's death, Saleem returned to Kfeir and resumed the leadership of the Druze. He was a very handsome person, intelligent, an able speaker, peaceful and liked by all. He was honored by the Turks being given the title of a "Bey."

He had two sons: one was living at Hasbaya, and the other went to Brazil, but returned and died here. The one at Hasbaya died there. After the death of Saleem, Soulieman became the chief. During the Syrian uprising against the French in 1925 and the coming of the revolutionists to Kfeir, Saleem, as well as Soulieman, took a noble stand to see that the Christians were not molested. The French rewarded Soulieman by appointing him a district governor in Jabel Druze and Saleem was summoned to visit the French High Commissioner in Beirut. After serving for some time in Jabel Druze, Soulieman returned home and became the Druze chief after the death of his brother, Saleem.

The death of Soulieman ended the long line of the Naufals leadership, not only at Kfeir but in the whole region. Education, political parties, increase of wealth, national independence and free thought have all worked together to kill the ancient feudal aristocracy.

Rehmeh

This family has always been a two-house family, except now it is one family only. When they came to Kfeir and from where they came, neither they nor the elders around them know. Whether Rahmeh is the family's real name or not, none also knows, as Rahmeh is a woman's name, meaning "mercy."

We know that this family once had two houses: one in the center of Haj Quarter; the other in the middle of the Abou Rizk section, facing their square. Hannah Rahmeh was the owner of the first house mentioned; he was a muleteer who had one son who went to America early this century. The second house belonged to Ayoub Rahmeh who gave birth to Soulieman and Soulieman gave birth to Ayoub and Chafic. Ayoub lived at Kfeir and his brother, Chafic,

went to Canada and there he is a prosperous merchant.

Rizkallah

This is another one house, one man's family. When and from where they came here is unknown since they had left here a long time ago. They were landowners and farmers. The known men of the Rizkallah family were Khalil and his son, Tomeh. Tomeh gave birth to Toufick who came here after World War II, got married and went back to the USA where he passed away.

Sab'ih

When the Sab'ih family came to Kfeir, its name was Aykali. It was the first Christian family to settle at Kfeir following the Awad-Khattib Druze family some eight hundred years ago. To look now at the remains of their houses on the cliff on the southern extreme side of the village overlooking the valley below, only a few courses of stone now remain, one would suddenly realize that these huge stones were not meant for building houses but for fortresses.

Why the family came to be called "Sab'ih" follows the usual trend in the Arabic world when the profession or the nickname surmounts the family's original name. There was once, at Kfeir, a man named Jirjis Aykali who was a very powerful, strong and daring man. He carried out heroic deeds in Wadi el-Taym, Palestine and Houran and always returned home successful. Therefore, the people of the village nicknamed him, "The Lion," el-Sab'ih. Obviously, the family, as well as Jirjis, adapted the name with pride.

The Sab'ih men had a reputation as good weavers. They carried out very little farming. They were good and peaceful citizens. They did not own much land but they were self-supporting.

After graduating from the American University of Beirut, Kamil Sab'ih taught school in Iraq and Lebanon for a good number of years and then took his family and migrated to the USA where his boys and girl became medical doctors. Makhoul Sab'ih's family went to Brazil while Assaf and his brothers, Mikhail and Saleem, went to the USA and the change of names followed them there as they became known as George. Those who remained here are all respectable citizens and some of them are good schoolteachers.

Sahili

A few hundred years ago, Abou Radwan Sahili came to Kfeir from the coastal regions of Acre in Palestine. This family was at first called "The Eiteem" and later, Sahili, pertaining to the word "Sahil" (coast). The Sahili family consisted of three brothers, two of which were killed in Ibrahim Pasha's wars. (This Ibrahim Pasha was an Egyptian General who led his army north against the Turks and passed through our regions).

The Sahili family lived in the southern section of the village, just a little below the Abou Rizk Quarter, where they had six or eight houses, now all in ruins, save the one rebuilt by Ibrahim several years ago. Bishara Sahili, after returning from the USA, built a house north of the Thabit Quarter before his death. During their stay at the village, the Palestinian Commandos occupied Bishara's house which was bombed time and again. When they left, a Lawen young man took over the house, repaired it and is now living in it. The house of Isbir Tweel behind the school was purchased by Saleem Sahili's boys. The majority of the men in this family migrated to Australia, Brazil, the USA, Canada and the West Indies. It was reported that some of them made fortunes, but they never visited their birthplace.

Saad

This family came to Kfeir from the Lebanese village of Ras el-Matn some four hundred years ago. Of the known men of this family were Makhoul and Assad and Khalil. They lived at the southern tip of the village and were noted for being good butchers, a profession which they bequeathed from father to son. Of these famous butchers was Nassif, Khalil and Assef in the last and early this century, also Toufick, son of Khalil.

All the young men of the Saad family of today are highly educated and hold high positions here and abroad, such as Dr. Edward with the Arabian Oil Co., his two brothers, the high officials at the British Bank of the Middle East in Beirut and Daniel, their brother, a teacher at Kfeir.

Sa'ieed

Some two hundred years ago, the Druze family of Sa'ieed came to Kfeir presumably from Ras el-Matn in Lebanon, as they say that they have some relatives there. At the turn of this century, they had three houses at Kfeir. There was Mur'iy who lived on the products of his land and was sometimes employed by the Turks. Ahmad was a cameleer and sometimes the guardian of the village crops. He had two sons: one is at Kfeir, the other, Hamad, went to Argentina after joining the revolutionists in 1925 and remained with them till the end of the revolt in 1927. He returned home several years ago, rebuilt his house and took his wife and two children and returned to Argentina to pass away there. There is the house of Ali who had one son, who has several boys here and in Saudi Arabia.

Sakr

The Sakr family were first called Mly'ib, who live in Baissour of Mount Lebanon. They were three brothers: one of them went to Kirmil in Palestine, the second went to Bka'assam in Syria and the third came to Kfeir. There are some Christian families by the name of Sakr, who claim that they are cousins.

At Kfeir, the Sakr men were mostly farmers and goatherders. At the beginning of this century, a number of its young men migrated to North and South America. Some returned; others did not and passed away there. Most of this family's young men are now soldiers in the Lebanese Army, two of them, Salman and Toufic, were martyrs.

The family has a branch in Jabel Druze known by the name, Rizk, being the name of the first Seakr man to live there.

Shalaan

Some forty or fifty years ago, a Druze man of the village of Ain Kinyat Banias in Syria divorced his wife. This man was from the Shalaan family. Being unable to live at Ain Kinyat Banias, the divorced wife returned to live with her parents at Hasbaya, leaving her only son with his father; a short while later he was married again. His new wife, as the case always is, could not possibly bear the presence of Mohammad at the house. Finally, Mohammad fled

from his father's house and came all the way to Hasbaya following his mother, who later was married again, and poor Mohammad became homeless. Finally, Mohammad landed at the El-Khoury family of Kfeir who took pity on him and accepted him at their house as an errand boy. They sent him to school, but it was a hopeless case. With a pick and a shovel, Mohammad was an excellent worker. For thirty-five years or more, he worked at El-Khoury's house and land.

A man from the Aissami family at Kfeir had gone to Brazil and died there. His two daughters lived at his house. Mohammad married the elder and lived with her and her sister. He had a son and a daughter before he passed away several years ago.

Shamas

Some four hundred years ago, the Shamas family came to Kfeir from the biblical city of Izzraa in Houran. They were three brothers: one settled in the town of Khiam to the south of Kfeir, the second in Joudiedat Marj-Ayoun and the third chose Kfeir. Ibrahim Shamas was the last living man of this family to live at Kfeir. He was a muleteer and owned a house and a few pieces of land. His children went to the USA and never returned. Not long ago, their house and property was sold.

Years ago, one of the Shamas men went to Beirut, his name was Jirji, who after years of hard work and perseverance became the leading Beiruti contractor and the leading fuel merchant. He passed away not long ago. His children followed in his footsteps as contractors.

Sweitti

The Sweitti family is one of the most ancient families to settle at Kfeir. None knows when and from where they came. At the present, none of the Sweitti family lives at Kfeir, migration and the struggle for existence had led this fine family to leave. Their house and property were sold a long time ago. The living members of this family are now in Damascus and in the village of Sihnaya near Damascus.

One member of this family is a very intelligent and important personality, none other than his Eminence, the Bishop Malatious Sweitti, now in South America.

Tomeh

Not long ago, the Tomeh family came to Kfeir from the neighboring Moslem village of Dniebeh, now called Marj-el-Zihour (Meadow of Roses). They and the Abouds came together to Kfeir; they were good landowners at Dniebeh but apparently their life was a hard one among their Moslem neighbors. It is regrettable to say that whether we like it or not, and whether we admit it or not, that the ancient religious hatred for the Christians in Lebanon may go into a deep hibernation once law and order dominate, but when the government is weak and disintegrated, as is the case now (1987), it jumps up murdering, marauding and devastating to no fruitful end. The Tomehs came to Kfeir seeking refuge and a peaceful life which was well afforded them. Now they have their homes and property and some of them went to Canada where they are very prosperous.

Thabit-Rahal-Abou Saab-Skaff

The Thabit family came to Kfeir some four hundred years ago. They came from the village Ain Hilya in Syria to which they had come from Akoura in Lebanon. At Kfeir, they chose that part of the village northwest of the Mikhail section. The Thabit family, with its tributaries of Rahal, Abou Saab and Skaff were once one of the largest Christian families at Kfeir. They were farmers, weavers, dyers and tradesmen whose business carried them south as far as Southern Palestine. From Kfeir, they spread out to several places such as Beirut, Tyre, Deir el-Kamar, Bhamdoun and Deir-el-Ahmar. At Shakba on the Jordan River, there is to be found a branch of this family which was founded by one of their men who had gone there, embraced Islam and married a Moslem girl.

The Thabit men are divided, in their physical structure, into two classes: the tall and the short. In this respect, they are like the Italians of the south who are very short and the Italians of the north who are very tall. In the past, they did not care much about educating their children as they needed them to help in the field. Now the case is entirely different. Nimeh Abou Rahal is a college graduate and the principal of the local schools; his two cousins, Nabil and Nabin are also teachers here while his brother, Assad, who was a teacher at Dhour Shoueit became a priest there and still

teaches school. Souhail Abou Rahal is another teacher here. Issam and Souhail Thabit, sons of Jamil, are both engineers and work in Syria. Three of Wadih Abou Rahal boys are college graduates and scattered between Beirut, Saudi Arabia and the USA. Soulieman Thabit, son of Shehadeh, the Mukhtar, is an electrical expert.

The late Makhoul and Nick Rahal returned home at the turn of this century, built homes, lived in them for a while, then returned to the USA and passed away there.

The late Nicola Rahal from Beckley in West Virginia contributed to the building of the city hall and school on his expense. The Rahals have ten houses at Kfeir now. A number of their young men are soldiers in the Lebanese Army. One house of the Skaff is at Kfeir now and one of their young men is a teacher. Of the Thabits, two or three houses now remain. One of their young men has a law degree from the University of Damascus and was a district governor in Syria. He, for some reason or another, left Syria and came to Lebanon.

Tweel

The known history of the Tweel (or Tawil) family of Kfeir is rather an interesting one. It ante-dates the rise of Islam in the Middle East. Years before the Mohammadan conquest of Roman Syria, the present day Tweels were a tribe living in and around Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan then called Philadelphia. The exact name of this tribe is unknown, but it had been related that it was ruled by two brothers: a tall one (Tawil) and a short one (Qasir). For some reason or another, the tall brother migrated with his clan of the tribe to Lebanon and settled in the town of Tibshar in the Kissirwan District. The short brother remained in Jordan and embraced Islam and became known as the Qasir. A famine struck Kissirwan in central Lebanon and the Tweels were again on the move. This time they came to Kfeir and that was some four hundred years ago.

At Kfeir, the Tweels were weavers, a craft which they had learned in Kissirwan. In time, their numbers increased and they became one of the largest families in the village. Some of their

men, by one way or the other, had learned how to cast money[37], which arose the ire of the Shihabi Princes at Hasbaya, who were the feudal lords of the region. Their treatment of the Tweels was very harsh and despotic which the Tweels could not possibly bear long and so they evacuated Kfeir and sought protection in Jabel Amil where the Assad family ruled. They settled at the town of Tieby where they were refugees for a considerable length of time, living among the Moslem Shiites.

At that time, Ahmad Boushnaki, the Turkish Governor at Acre in Palestine, better known as "Jazzar" (Butcher) set out to subdue Jabal Amil and its ruling Assad family, recruiting for his campaign a large army. The Assads along with the Tweels fled to Damascus and remained there until the Hymour family of Kiraoun in the Bekaa Plains intermediated between the "Butcher" and the Assads who were permitted to return to their homes.

The Tweels, however, did not return to Jabal Amil but chose the town of Ayha in the District of Rashaya to the north of Kfeir to live. At that time, Rashaya was ruled by the Aryan family who protected the Tweels. While at Ayha, a Tweel man by the name of Jirjis was ordained a priest of the Orthodox Community there and remained all his life. With the help of Shibli Agha Aryan, the governor of Rashaya, the Tweels were permitted to return to Kfeir. Also, the House of Abou Hassan Tweel went and lived at the following villages on the other side of the Hermon Mountain, Majdal Shamiss, Tronji and Ain el-Shaara. Others went to Haifa in Palestine and some to Jdeidat, Marj-Ayoun who became known as the Salamah-Tweel house. A man from the Tweel family remained in Damascus, embraced Islam, married a Moslem girl and lived all his life there. Hassan Tweel and his family are the outstanding persons in Damascus from this branch.

Of the noted persons of the Tweel family at Kfeir was the priest Abdullah who was a pious man and able to settle knotty problems and disputes. Among the old Tweels, who may be the great grandsons of the ancient Tweels who came to Kfeir some four hundred years ago, we have Makhoul, Jabour, Salameh, Abou

[37] Casting coins refers to making coins by pouring melted metal into a mold, i.e. casting. It has been used for regular coins, particularly in the Far East, but also in the Mediterranean world.

Khair, Aboud, Soulieman, Milhim and Isbir.

Mary Tweel from the city of Huntington, West Virginia was, perhaps, the first Kfeirian woman to have a college degree.

Zakhem

At Rashaya el-Wadi, the Zakhem family is well-known. Almost a hundred years ago, some of the Zakhem men came to Kfeir to work as coppersmiths. Obviously, they liked the hospitality of the Kfeirians and remained. The last man of the Zakhem family to live at Kfeir was Yousef, who early in this century left the village and went to Canada. By and by, his sons and wife followed him. He died there. His house overlooking the square in the Abou Rizk Quarter recently sold to Ramiz Khawaja. Before passing away, his son, Sa'ied and his wife, Salwa Abou Jamra returned to Kfeir for a short visit. They both died in Canada.

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In ending this family chapter, we presume that most of the people mentioned here are now dead and we apologize for any error that occurred, as our sources were very limited. The elders who were supposed to know their histories have all passed away and those alive and rather old cannot remember. However, it is better than nothing.

Christian Families who no longer live in Kfeir:

Abou Shalash
Abou Khier
Abou Farah
Abou Halaka
Amar
Ansara
Bolus
Francice
Ghantous
Hana
Homsi
Istphan
Jilina
Jriess
Junied
Khawaja
Khoury
Nassif
Korotos
Lakiss
Malaab
Nadaf
Nassour
Rizhallah
Sabra
Saikali
Salami
Shamass
Skaff
Souieti
Zakhira
Zakhou

Druze Families who no longer live in Kfeir:

Alieyan
Amer
Aziz
Hamzeh
Harb
Hriek
Khadaj
Khattib
Matter
Madawar
Nadaf
Nassir
Raban
Shamandi
Shoumari
Zeinieh

BOOK IV

Stories

22

HILLBRED

by Arreph El-Khoury

Hasbaya is a nice little city—"The Biggest Little City Between Mount Hermon and the Mediterranean," as it is called by its inhabitants. Squatting on its two slopes around the banks of its river, its gray and white stone houses with their flat or pyramidal roofs among the trees give the appearance of bas-relief on emerald-green, deep sea majolica. The most noticeable building in Hasbaya, next to the ancient crusaders' castle, is the courthouse, which was built by the Turks, to be inherited by the Arabs when His Majesty King Faisal was the head of the Syrian government after the World War, and most recently by the Lebanese government after the French had added Hasbaya to Mount Lebanon.

On a warm and sunny spring day in which the glorious Syrian sun was bathing in a sea of jade and the warm wind was racing over the purple and blue hills, a young man by the name of Kasid and a girl by the name of Hind were seen entering the high archway gate of the courthouse, in front of which a Lebanese soldier with a fixed bayonet stood motionless as if carved of rock.

They were dressed in homespun clothes and wore native shoes, black and hobnailed. A black *ighal* of coiled goat's hair encircled Kasid's white muslin headkerchief. Under the tight-fitting red aba which reached to his knees, he wore an embroidered jacket and vest of black cloth and a shirt of effulgent white. A peach-colored silk sash around his waist held a curved dagger. His trousers were voluminous, and indigo dyed. As for Hind, her gentle, brown eyes were heavily loaded with kohl and her fingertips dyed red with

henna. The white muslin *mandil* over her head fell in folds to her ankles, partially obscuring her blue dress and black coat.

The eyes of this young pair were scrutinizing every object around them as they proceeded forward. Silently they advanced toward the inner courtyard where a number of soldiers were basking in the sun. They turned their eyes away from the soldiers as if these were gray *jin* of evil and looked to the left, knowing not what to do. On the wall, they saw a number of bulletins on blackboards. Kasid advanced toward the bulletins, read a while, turned his head away from them and came back to Hind. He motioned her to follow him. She obeyed, and they walked to the end of the corridor, glanced to the left and right. Kasid, seeing a few doors at their right, motioned Hind to follow him a second time, walked toward these doors and began to read the signs on them. He read the sign on the first, the second, the third, and, seeing that none of these doors was that of the office he sought, he advanced to the foot of a winding stairway which led to the second story.

Kasid looked at the grim, ghastly walls and the disconsolate steps and paused for a moment. Finally, he told Hind to follow him and began to climb the stairs with the uncertain, suspicious step of the hillbred who reckons with the inequalities of the land. Hind followed him in silence. Sometimes he was looking at the walls, at other times glancing over his shoulder at Hind behind him, and with added mistrust at the higher steps. Finally, they reached a door at their left with the Clerk's sign on it. Here they stood firm—their eyes like those of a cat confronted by a mastiff.

"Enter," Kasid ordered Hind with a motion of his head.

"You enter—you who are armed with a dagger!" retorted Hind.

Kasid stood his ground. Hind looked at him. He grinned childishly. She turned her head away from him and stared at the wall. Kasid drew his head close to her. She turned facing him. She was the first to speak. "What shall we do?"

"I do not know, by Allah!" replied Kasid with an awkward shrug of his broad shoulders. They looked at each other helplessly. Kasid ventured a step forward toward the door of the Clerk's office. Hind followed him with her eyes as her red lips opened with a sardonic smile. Suddenly he stopped, pondered a while and as suddenly sat

down on the steps. Hind came and sat beside him as if they were on the steps of their respective houses.

"Why don't you enter?" asked Kasid.

"Why don't you enter first and bring it?" she snapped at him.

Kasid shook his head disapprovingly.

At that moment, they heard footsteps coming toward them from the higher part of the steps and in unison they looked over their shoulders. A man, dressed in European clothes, came down toward them. They turned their heads away from him. The man continued to descend until he was two steps from them.

"What are you doing here?" the man asked. They did not answer but smiled. "What are you doing here—what do you want?" he asked impatiently.

They stood up. "We want to enter this room," Kasid said, pointing to the door of the Clerk's office.

"Come on," said the man, smiling, "I am the Clerk." He walked to the door and pushed it open. He entered. Kasid and Hind followed him inside with a shambling gait.

The Clerk went inside his office and faced them across a wide desk. He sat on a chair. "Now," he said, business-like, "what can we do for you?"

"We want a marriage license," announced Kasid, his face flushing darkly. Hind giggled.

The Clerk smiled broadly, opened a drawer and produced a sheet of paper which he handed to Kasid across the table saying, "Fill it in."

Kasid took the sheet of paper with a shaky hand, looked at Hind, motioned her to follow him and went to another desk in the room and sat down on a chair. There were penholders, inkwells and blotters on the desk. Kasid began to read and write without asking Hind a question. She stood looking at him and smiling sarcastically. Finally, he stood up, breathed contentedly, motioned Hind to follow him and came toward the Clerk. He handed him the sheet of paper. The Clerk began to read what Kasid had written in an exceptionally poor penmanship; he read their names, ages, conditions, birthplaces, the names of their parents, their occupations, their addresses and the date. Glancing at the sheet of paper for a second time, the Clerk

smiled and shook his head.

"My lad," said the Clerk sympathetically, "you are not old enough nor is she!"

"Allahu Akbar! (God is Greater)," Kasid and Hind exclaimed in unison. "How old do we have to be?" asked Kasid with a dark frown on his highly hawkish face.

The Clerk told him the age required by the law.

"But we are not that and we want to marry each other," argued Kasid, vehemently.

"It is necessary, then, to have your parents sign this sheet of paper before we can issue a license for you," the Clerk informed him as he handed him the sheet of paper.

"We are orphans. Our parents were killed by the French in the last uprising against them," pronounced Kasid with a pain in his heart.

"It is regrettable; you have to wait until you are old enough," said the Clerk.

Kasid made a wry face. He looked at Hind beside him and suddenly his face became haggard, passionate and tragic. Quickly, he returned the sheet of paper to the Clerk and with his right hand on the haft of his dagger and his left grasping Hind by the arm, he went out of the room, whispering in her ears, "Allah did not say so in the Book!"

23

A WOMAN OF THE HILLS

by Arreph El-Khoury

A dramatic story of the Arabs and the revenge of a woman who loved her murdered Shaikh—by a young Syrian American author.

The village of Thouryah squatted on its slope, its whitewashed walls afire in the glare of the dying sun; and up in the palatial house of its late shaikh, a beautiful young woman sat on a divan in a large hall, looking through the opened window at the snow-covered hills. She was dressed in black, for her husband, Shaikh Tallall, the head of the village, had been recently killed in battle when he led his men against those of the village of El-Mizan.

Mrysh, for this was the young woman's name, looked at the hills, and her heart was heavy with grief. She had loved her husband, and his sudden death, just a few months after they were married, had struck a harsh note in the hidden recesses of her being. Her final resolve was never to marry again. Perhaps (and Allah is All-Merciful) the unborn would be a man-child to inherit his father's office.

How long Mrysh sat and looked at the disappearing sun on the summit of Mount Hermon, she did not know, but watching the sunset brought solace to her heart. Suddenly she heard a knock at the door of the hall. She left her seat on the divan, walked to the door and turned it open. In front of her stood her maid.

"Good omen, if it pleases Allah?" asked Mrysh.

"Shaikh Marouph is seeking audience," announced the maid.

Shaikh Marouph was the master of the village horsemen. He had fought at her husband's side in many a tight battle.

"Shaikh Marouph is one of us—admit him," said Mrysh to the maid, and returned to her seat. The maid departed.

It was not long until she returned with Shaikh Marouph dragging his broad, long simitar behind him. He was of gigantic height and broad of shoulders. His massive chest was like a deep drum and his dash like that of a Tatar emperor. The maid pushed the door open and invited Shaikh Marouph to enter the hall.

Mrysh stood up and met him in the middle of the room. "May your evening be happy, O Shaikha," said Shaikh Marouph in his guttural voice.

At hearing Shaikh Marouph address her as a *shaikha* (wife of a shaikh), Mrysh smiled bitterly to herself, but the smile did not reach to her face and lips. "A dowager shaikha am I—and at the age of eighteen! Oh, the irony of Fate!" she said to herself. To Shaikh Marouph she said: "And may your evening be blessed, O Shaikh Marouph. Come, sit down," and she indicated the corner of the divan—the seat of honor in Arabic-speaking countries.

Shaikh Marouph walked to the corner and sat down. Mrysh came and sat near him. She wondered at this sudden and unexpected visit of Shaikh Marouph. But Shaikh Marouph perceived what was passing in her mind and spoke. "I have come about a matter of great importance."

Mrysh surveyed him from the corners of her brown eyes. "A matter of great importance! What could it be, O Shaikh Marouph?" she asked.

"It is about the death of our late young chief, your husband—may Allah rest his soul," said Shaikh Marouph.

Her eyes were unblinking. "My husband and his death? O Shaikh Marouph, and for all I know he was killed in battle. Do you know other things concerning his death?"

"Yes."

"Tell me! Pray, tell me!" She seized his hands.

"I shall," was his answer. "Your husband was not killed by our enemies during the battle. He is dead and buried now (may Allah make paradise his dwelling), but—" Shaikh Marouph hesitated.

"But what?" darted Mrysh.

"But he should be avenged."

"Avenged? This is indeed strange! He was killed in a battle."

"This I know, but there are some hidden things about his strange death which none knows save Allah and myself."

Mrysh bit her lip and stared at Shaikh Marouph. "For Allah's sake, tell me all you know."

"Your husband was killed by our ally in that battle."

"Do you mean Shaikh Dirdar Ibn Dirdar? As I recall, he was the only man to ride with his men among your ranks."

"Dirdar Ibn Dirdar shot your husband in the back. I saw him with my eyes but could not say a word, fearing that if I were to speak, or kill Dirdar Ibn Dirdar, a schism in our ranks would be the inevitable result and at that crucial moment the victory was falling into our hands."

Mrysh pondered a while and remembered what had happened a year or two before she was married to her late husband. Dirdar had come from his village and dismounted in her father's house. He asked her hand in marriage and was politely refused, for her father had already pledged his word to her late husband. Dirdar Ibn Dirdar became very angry and left the house, threatening to take her by force or otherwise. Her late husband heard of Dirdar's threats, rode his swiftest mare and followed Dirdar to his village. He overtook him on the bridge, just a mile or two before Dirdar's village, gave him a sound beating and returned home. Upon hearing of this, Mrysh's father arranged for a peace between the two young chiefs and the incident was dead and forgotten.

"I see," said Mrysh thoughtfully, "then Dirdar killed him for the beating which my husband had given him."

"Not the beating, but that which hurts a man more than the swish of a bamboo wand."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Jealousy," replied Shaikh Marouph.

Suddenly Mrysh stood up and walked to the door. Shaikh Marouph followed her. "Where are you going, in Allah's peace?" he asked.

"I am going to summon the shaikhs of the village for a meeting and demand them to avenge my husband," she said.

Shaikh Marouph thought her idea to be folly. "It is the logical

thing to do, but alas! Not practical," he told her.

"And why?"

"Simply because the minor shaikhs of the village would not declare war on Dirdar Ibn Dirdar. He is more powerful than we and has just helped us win a battle. I shall be the first to oppose your suggestion, for I know our strength and his. To your presence I say this much: that if we were to make war on him it would mean a shameful defeat for us and an inglorious fight."

"Then what shall we do, O master of the horsemen?"

"Allah is All-Merciful, and He does not shut a door until He opens another. Be patient, O *Shaikha*. Wait and hope. The *bdui* (nomad) avenged himself after forty years and then said that he was too hasty. We are all descendants of the sons of the sand dunes."

"Verily, Allah is with the patient people," commented Mrysh.

Shaikh Marouph left her and went his way.

A month later Mrysh was seated in her richly furnished court when one of her maids came announcing the coming of a visitor. The visitor was a village woman, named Khardalli. Mrysh told the maid to bring her inside.

Khardalli was an old woman whose wrinkled face appeared like a gnarled block of oakwood. "May your evening be happy, O Mrysh," she said.

"And may your evening be blessed," replied Mrysh. "Come, sit."

Khardalli did not have to be invited twice; she sat on a rug near the brazier, which was filled with charcoal fire that glowed like a heap of ruby balls. Mrysh sat facing her. Khardalli's bleary eyes surveyed the corners of the place with a scrutinizing glance. The maid left.

Khardalli looked at Mrysh. "I have come," she began, "to pay my respects to you and ask you to do me a slight favor."

"Yob, old one," said Mrysh, "if there be a service which you may think I can render you, rest assured that to the fulfillment of it you will find me standing on the firmest of foot."

"May the All-Powerful grant you long age, you to whom all good may come," said Khardalli. "I have come to ask you to accompany me to my humble house to write me a letter to my son—my only son, who, as you no doubt know, is serving his term in the Sultan's army."

"But we can do it here," replied Mrysh.

Khardalli shook her head. "Many things I want to tell him and while I am saying them to you someone may hear us in this great house which is filled with servants, guards, slaves, and peasants. In my house there is not a soul to disturb us and I would be free to think and you would be free to write. Come with me (may Allah keep you!) and do this good deed for the Face of Allah," persisted Khardalli indefatigably.

Mrysh found it useless to argue with the resolute old soul.

"Very well then, to your house we shall go," she said.

So, to Khardalli's house they went. On their way, they passed by the village graveyard and there, in the dark of night, Mrysh saw the great tomb of her husband with its high alabaster dome shining crimson in the darkness. A pain surged in her young heart and tears rushed to her eyes. Slowly, she moved until they were near Khardalli's house, when suddenly the latter stopped.

"May Allah forgive me!" Khardalli said apologetically.

"Why, what have you done?" asked Mrysh in astonishment.

"I forgot that I have neither ink nor paper in my wretched house," Khardalli muttered.

"Do not let that trouble you. I shall return to my house and fetch some," said Mrysh.

Khardalli grinned. "No!" she said firmly, "I shall borrow them from my good neighbor, Oum el-Mouhseinein. Your house is too far away from here and it will take me but a moment to go and come back. Here is the key to my house. Go and sit by the fire until I return, O daughter of the strong and free." She handed Mrysh the wooden key to her house and departed in the direction of the narrow, crooked alley at her right and soon vanished in the darkness like a gray, hunchbacked genie of evil.

Mrysh walked to the inner courtyard of Khardalli's house. She put the key into the lock and turned it around twice, then pushed the door ajar. She stood facing a long corridor illuminated by the dim oil-lamp that flickered dismally. She walked to the first door on her right, which she knew was the door of the winter quarter, in the meantime thinking that the place was a loneliness in which not even the wailing of *jin* was to be heard. But as she pushed this door

open, her brown eyes almost jumped out from the sockets. Before her stood Dirdar Ibn Dirdar, the man who had killed her husband. On the threshold she stood panting. She knew that she had fallen into a trap.

Shaikh Dirdar Ibn Dirdar was tall, broad of shoulders and fully armed. He carried two cartridge belts athwart his massive chest. Two heavy automatic pistols hung at his hips. His sash was decorated with a wicked, curved dagger. A long simitar swung at his side from silver cords with huge tassels. In his right hand, he carried a whip with a golden knob. His left hand toyed with his black mustache that looked like the tail of a scorpion. He advanced toward Mrysh, smiling through half-closed eyelids.

"Welcome, O light of the two worlds," he greeted her.

Seeing him smile, Mrysh recovered from her first shock; she became a little cool and stopped panting. Her body was straight like a lance now, her head proudly erect over her supple shoulders. Her fright turned into anger.

"Yob! O son of unmentionable begettings, back to the kennel!" she snarled at him.

Dirdar met her insult with a broad smile. "A year or so ago I came to your father; now I come to you—"

"And you shall be refused and discarded like an old dirty garment; and if the need arose, the youngest of the village youths would give you a worse beating than the one you received at the hands of my late husband, who was stronger than you."

Dirdar seemed not to pay the least attention to her words. He went on, "I have come this time to take you away with me to my village and there I shall make you my wife."

Mrysh grinned sarcastically at his words. "And it was through that old woman's intermediacy that you brought me to this house in a manner typical of a sniveling, slinking, sneaking fox, O vilest of Allah's creatures; and then you have the effrontery to order me to go away with you to be your wife as if I were a gipsy dancing-girl or a black slave-girl from Africa, O son of a burnt father! Away from my presence—away! And may the dirt-nosed pigs eat your last meal, O dog and a son of sixteen dogs!"

Her voice was high-pitched and her gestures were picturesque,

but not effective enough to stop Dirdar from advancing toward her.

"Stop where you are!" her words stabbed at him.

"What would you do?" he asked.

"I would scream, and in but a glance the entire village would be at your throat."

"Do it then," and he advanced toward her. But she did not scream, for at that moment her mind flashed and the words of Shaikh Marouph rang in her ears: *"Allah ma ghalak baab il falab baab"* (Allah does not shut a door until He opens another).

"Why don't you scream?" asked Dirdar sardonically.

"I simply can't," she said meekly, with the air of one who is vanquished.

"Thanks be to Allah!" he murmured and smiled broadly. The storm was subdued. She gave him her hand and he covered it with kisses.

"Come, let us be going before the men of the village see us, for if I were caught, they would cut my throat," she told him.

"Not while this rifle is in my right hand and this simitar is in my left," he said confidently and ran to the stable and brought his mare. He mounted, and placed Mrysh before him on the saddlebow. They left the village unmolested.

Toward his own village they went. The north wind was riding a racked sky, but on they went until they reached the bridge below Dirdar's village. It was the same bridge on which her late husband had given Dirdar a sound beating. Under the bridge, the roaring water of the melted snow surged up to a man's height among the granite boulders. Here, Dirdar secured his mare and looked around. He had reached his own territory, where he was amir.

Mrysh looked at his face. She raised her left hand and began toying with his mustache. Her fingers moved like butterflies before his eyes. Her right hand was free. Feeling the warmth of her hand against his cheek, Dirdar was intoxicated with delight.

"Am I not fortunate to be alone with you—you who are so strong, so rich and so handsome that any woman might—"

Suddenly, Dirdar saw something that had cut a silver streak before his eyes and a shrill shriek like the bark of a hyena came from his throat. For Mrysh had swiftly lured him by rubbing her

left hand against his cheek while with her right she had snatched his dagger from its scabbard and buried it deep in his heart.

"My husband is avenged!" she said, and Dirdar lived long enough to hear her words.

Quickly, she jumped to the ground and watched him fall. His left foot was caught in the stirrup; she freed it and he fell to the snow-covered arch of the bridge. She seized him by the neck and dragged him to the edge.

"May the Merciful Allah never have pity on his soul!" she muttered and tumbled his body into the roaring torrent.

She looked toward the East. Her left hand was pressed against her bosom, her right lifted the blood smeared dagger skyward.

"Thou, O Allah, let this be a man child, so he may sit in his father's saddle!"

She mounted the richly caparisoned mare of the dead shaikh and rode away toward her own village.

Indeed, the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.
Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose in hand
My thread bare Penitence apieces tore.

–Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

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THE SNARE

By Arreph El-Khoury
Hammad returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca, only to find himself mulcted of his money.
This story is only partially available.

Behind the little desk in the office that overlooked the inner courtyard of the Inn of the Seven Simitars, Madam Azuri sat giving orders like a dowager sultana, while in the courtyard the dust was surging in overlapping clouds. The rabble was deafening, characteristically Arabian; for the place was filled with camels, mules, horses, donkeys, sheep, goats and men from the desert, men from the city and villagers who cried and shouted boisterously.

As Madam Azuri gave orders and gossiped with her patrons, she smoked a rose-tinted waterpipe and methodically fanned herself with a beautiful Japanese fan. Occasionally, she cast a glance into the courtyard and smiled through half closed eyelids. Her glances below invariably sought out the man who squatted near the pond in the middle of the courtyard. Hammad, the man, was dressed in village attire. He had squatted there, heeding neither the filth nor that dust nor even the scorching rays of that typical tropical Arabian sun that beat on his head like crackling spears. He was beguiling himself by moving a bamboo wand from one hand to the other.

Madam Azuri noticed that he had remained in the same place for more than two hours. Several times, she thought she would summon him and ask him a question or two, but each time a servant or a patron interrupted. Finally, she was alone. She clapped her delicate hands and her *khadima* (girl-servant) ran to her.

"Tell that man to come here," ordered Madam Azuri, pointing to Hammad, who crouched near the pond like a meditating Buddha.

The *khadima* ran, her bushy hair flying in the wind.

It was not long till the *khadima* returned, Hammad walking behind her with a shambling gait. He appeared fatigued and worried. His clothes were ragged, his eyes bloodshot, his face cadaverous. He stopped in front of the desk and stood indifferently, waiting for Madam Azuri to speak.

"What is troubling you, may I ask?" she demanded, smiling a little.

"Nothing!" replied Hammad, dryly.

"Are you sick?"

"No."

"What made you sit in the same place for more than two hours?"

"Leave me to my misery!"

"I may help you!" Madam Azuri replied kindly.

Hammad shrugged his shoulders. After a moment of silence, he ventured, "I lost everything."

"What—your wife and house?"

"No! Thanks be to Allah the Lord of Mercy; I am not married."

"What then?"

"Everything I own in this world."

"Money?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Five hundred Turkish pounds in gold."

"How?"

Hammad told her that before going on a pilgrimage to Mecca he had left the

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ABDALLAH'S KFEIR TODAY

By Bruce Conde and Arreph El Khoury

"Abdallah at-Tawil, first, with 241 points," announced the head of Sidon's Rashidiya prep school at the end of the 1952-53 school year. Thus did the pint-sized fifteen-and-a-half-year-old student from al-Kfeir village on the slopes of Jebal Sheikh (Mt. Hermon) defeat, for the second time, gloomy prognostications of almost everyone except Abdallah himself that he would not be able to wage the unequal struggle successfully for another year.

Abdallah, although belonging to a very poor family which could hardly keep him in school, proved to be the best student of his mountain village and was encouraged by the town's two overworked teachers, Ustez Yusuf Kahil and Ustez Emile Zankoul, to seek higher education at all costs.

Abdallah, Kfeir's Problem

After graduating first in his class from the village primary school, the lad became a first-class problem to his family and to the whole village.

According to age-old custom, his station in life indicated for him, as for his father, an unrewarding existence of backbreaking toil for two or three pounds a day, attempting to scratch a living from the rocky, almost waterless sides of the mountain.

But Abdallah rebelled. Like Ustez Yusuf and Ustez Emile, he wanted to become a teacher and to open new horizons to the many promising young students of Kfeir. Some of them, with relatives in America, would be able to break away with their rudiments of

education and start a new and better life along with the more than 50% of Kfeirian villagers now living overseas. The others, with education, would rebel too and insist on better conditions for those who remained, using their knowledge to restore and improve the town's dwindling means of survival.

A compromise was found in the offer of a relative in the army, Chief Warrant Officer Nicola Ghantous, who promised to devote the surplus of his pay to Abdallah's tuition, books and parts of his living expenses for one year at the next higher school in Marj-Ayoun but after that, Abdallah would be "on his own."

First in Marj-Ayoun

When the astonished village was advised at the end of the 1952 school year that Abdallah had come out first in Marj-Ayoun, too, everyone knew that the real trouble was about to begin. The 1951 scene was repeated with greater intensity. Ustez Yusuf took up the cudgels in defense of his star pupil, but with a growing school age family of his own and a bare 150-pound-a-month salary, he could not subsidize Abdallah's advance to the big south Lebanon prep school at Sidon, from whence in a few years, graduates could go to the Beirut normal school on teaching scholarships, their battle for subsistence finally won. Just before the deadline for fall semester registration at the Rashidiya school of Sidon, Abdallah, without any guarantee of funds, without food and without the knowledge of anyone in Kfeir, slipped away one night on a mysterious 5-day trip.

160 Kilometers on Foot

On September 26, too tired to speak, the dusty barefooted student stumbled into the family home in Kfeir and fell into a deep sleep.

The next day, all Kfeir knew that its young problem child had gone across country, on foot, with only two or three meals, the 160 kilometers to Sidon and back and had registered for the 1952-53 school year at the Rashidiya.

The audacity of it!

Another day and the news reached Beirut, where it was told and retold in Hanna Thabet's little New Windsor Hotel on the Bourj, where Kfeir folk gather when in the capital city. Through

the Thabets and their friend, Antoine Muawwad, the saga of Abdallah reached "The Star" where it was written up in the hope that new friends would be found to add to the small amounts the Kfeirians and friends of "The Star" had begun to scrape together to help the plucky student.

Yemen to the Rescue

Next month, as Abdallah, in his first month at Rashidiya, had reached the end of his slender resources, a "Star" reader in Washington D.C., the Sayed Abdurrahman Abu Taleb, Permanent Yemen Delegate to the U.N. and Charge d'Affaires of the Royal Yemen Legation in Washington, sent twenty dollars "in memory of Lebanese Amin Rihani's help to Yemenite education in the 1920's. This meant seventy pounds to hard-pressed Abdallah and virtually assured the completion of his critical first year in Sidon.

Living in a small, almost unfurnished room, with inadequate lighting, clothing and food, only sure of a weekly supply of mountain bread and olives from his mother in Kfeir, Abdallah was in no condition to compete successfully with his more fortunate schoolmates. But compete he did. By studying nightly until twelve o'clock and by taking advantage of the extra tutoring above certificate requirements which Ustez Yufus and Ustez Emile impart gratis to all their deserving bright students too poor to pay for "special lessons," the young man from Kfeir again came out at the top of his class.

New Crisis

"If I work hard," said Abdallah, "I may be able to finish the Rashidiya course in one more year." He mentioned this goal wistfully, for the good Sayed Abdurrahman had been transferred back to the mountains of Yemen, and Kfeirians, their meagre sources of water now inadequate even for domestic uses, were financially worse off than in 1952. Abdallah's father had gone to Beirut to work as a stonecutter for 3.50 Lebanese Pounds per day. In addition to the unsolvable problem of Abdallah, Papa Selim was now faced with the fact that his 13-year-old second son, Elias, had just come out first in the Kfeir school, and was equally insistent on

higher education. Elias offered to quit school in 1952 and work as a houseboy in Beirut to contribute to Abdallah's chances of further schooling but had been turned down because he was tiny.

At this point, AUB professor Dr. Edward Hope and his wife and children, a Beirut architect, and a few other friends began getting together some funds for Abdallah, and clothing for both Abdallah and Elias—enough to start out with books and initial expenses for the 1953 school year.

At the same time, a "Star" reporter went down to Kfeir to see what manner of village and people produce such students as Abdallah and such teachers as Ustez Yusuf.

It is a good two-and-a-half to three-hour drive, for a minimum "service" of not less than five pounds, to Abdallah's town near Mt. Hermon, by the route described in the preceding article. Passing Hasbaya, the road winds farther up the foothills of Jebal Sheikh to Kfeir, on the sunny southern slope of an east-west ridge running down from the mountain.

Below the road, near the village entrance, Abdallah's school faces the ancient village church of St. George. Above the road is the Thabet's home. Abdallah lived with his mother and little brothers near the east end of town, where the one functioning spring and dwindling second one divide the Orthodox and Druze quarters.

Kfeir is two-thirds Christian, mostly Orthodox, and one third Druze, for on the town's outskirts is Nebi Sheit, reputed tomb of Ad-Darazi, namesake of the sect and first Druze missionary to come to Lebanon in the 11th Century. But the town's 800-odd inhabitants live in complete social integration, overflowing the old sectarian "quarters" and are now virtually indistinguishable along traditional lines.

From their relatives in America, they have received an electric power station so that Kfeir, until midnight, now has adequate lighting, including streetlights.

Together, they are struggling to develop a new life-giving water supply that alone can insure the village's survival. In the old days, tobacco, mulberry and grape culture made Kfeir prosperous and the two springs were adequate for the smaller population. The Regiw monopoly has ended the tobacco growing, the silk industry

of Lebanon is no more, and a vine disease has wiped out most of the grapes.

Kfeir has a habit of producing progressive citizens, but most of these must seek a living abroad.

Faris Bey el-Khoury

Syria's elder statesman, the distinguished Faris Bey el-Khoury, former Prime Minister, is Kfeir's most illustrious living son today. His brother, Ayoub el-Khoury, still maintains the family home in Kfeir—which extended its hospitality to the "Star" reporter during the first night of his stay in Kfeir. As-Sayed Ayoub's son, Arreph, is the well-known Syrian short story writer of today, who may follow in his uncle's footsteps in the long, hard fight for Arab unity and progress.

Kfeir's people are generous. Those of Abdallah's family, who can ill-afford it, practically wrecked their precarious finances despite all the ruses the reporter could employ, in extending a welcome dinner of Arab delicacies. Scarcely had the visitor set foot in the yard than Umm Abdallah cast a menacing glance at one of the family's chickens, destined to become the piece de resistance of the evening festivities.

Kfeir, Hospitality Unlimited

The Thabets were equally insistent, as were the Khourys, the Mukhtar, and a neighboring Druze family, while Ustez Yusuf's household surrounded the Beiruti newspaperman in force.

All were proud of Abdallah; all were grateful for the outside help which had supplemented their slender means. The self-effacing Abdallah was prevailed upon to take his first picture with proud, beaming Ustez Yusuf, and another at the school.

The Orthodox showed their spotless white church with its ancient carved portal stones, its crystal chandeliers of better days. The Druze disclosed their seldom-seen tomb of ad-Darazi, beneath its extremely old oak tree, and what is probably the oldest Druze Khalwat in Lebanon, while expeditions to virtually unknown historic sites of country "off the map" were organized.

Figs and grapes were in season and it was impossible to pass

farmers bringing home the produce of out-of-town terraces without being obliged to accept a handful of the choicest fruits.

This is Abdallah's Kfeir today—the town and people to whom he wishes to devote his life by following in Ustez Yusuf's footsteps.

Will he succeed?

□ □ □

1960 Postscript

In June of 1954, Abdallah graduated with honors from the Sidon Rashidiya School and passed the Normal School competitive examinations with flying colors, but as there were approximately four times as many eligible teacher candidates as places available, and as political influence began to raise its head in the selective process, it again looked as though Abdallah had reached the end of a blind alley, for political influence he had none.

One of the small groups which had continued to sponsor the young student up to this point then appealed to the office of member of Parliament Emile Bustany to intervene on the basis of the merits of the case. The well-known Deputy was absent at a world parliamentarians' congress of Vienna but his secretary, Kamal Khawil, and his attorney, Maitre Fuad Bustany, in view of the urgency of the situation, took it up with the Normal School Director, Professor Fuad Bustany. The latter, on studying Abdallah's superior marks and reviewing the record of his long struggle against odds to become a teacher, personally directed that the Kfeirian be admitted to the teachers' college in October, 1954.

By 1958, the young candidate-teacher was an honor graduate of the Normal School and was given the opportunity of choosing the area for his first teaching assignment. It goes without saying that he persevered in his boyhood dream and is now al-Ustaz Abdallah of the government school of al-Kfeir, thus bringing to a happy ending the epic of Abdallah of Kfeir—another chapter in the living drama of the renaissance of an ancient land.

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BY DONKEY TO AIN AATA

By Bruce Conte and Arreph El-Khoury

"By Donkey to Ain Aata," said Abu Issam, as he brought our donkey caravan to the end of Kfeir's territory, and also of Hasbaya. "Beyond this Wadi Kumassiya is Ain Aata, in the jurisdiction of Rashaya."

The STAR'S reporter took this as a signal to slide gratefully off his donkey and to pretend to look for the place in the "Guide Bleu."

"It's not here," he said.

"That's all right," answered Abu Issam's cousin Shehade, "there's a Roman temple ruin here, too,"

"Where?"

"On the edge, overlooking the wadi. Come."

It was a Roman ruin, all right, on the military crest of the shelf high above the wadi. Only two courses of well-dressed stones remained in place, but the orientation was due east, toward Mt. Hermon. It was six by twenty meters in size. Bits of medium sized stone columns were also half buried in the vicinity.

The Vineyard Spring

By this time, Issam and Abdallah had signalled from the ancient 'Ain al-Krum (Vineyard Spring) above that the grapes they had appropriated from now abandoned vineyards had been cooled in the spring.

"One hour out of Kfeir," said the reporter, "Will we reach the Ain Harshe temple in another hour? "

"That depends," said Abu Issam, reaching for another bunch of

grapes, "whether we go by Ain Harshe or Ain Ata, the temple is an hour's walk from either."

The "Guide Bleu" maintained its stubborn blackout of any interesting news in the vicinity. "Ain Ata," it said, "is a village of 650 inhabitants, mostly Druzes," nothing more.

"Any antiquities?"

Shehade and he exchanged glances and a few remarks in Arabic. It was obvious they had decided to go via Ain Ata. They were vague.

Donkeys on Strike

The donkeys, meanwhile, refused to drink or to eat any grapes. Abu Issam had gone on strike against carrying small Issam and his substantially built father, but Abdallah's beast had been persuaded to carry both of the small fry. Tony's donkey tried to turn off the trail at every intersection. The STAR's was on a slowdown strike. Only Shehade, which his master rode side-saddle style, was reasonable, so with Shehade in the lead, the caravan went up the deeply rutted trail, worn in places more than a meter deep in the living rock, toward Ain Ata.

"You'll like Ain Ata," said Abu Issam consolingly to the suspicious reporter. "It's like Kfeir in reverse, two thirds Druze and one third Orthodox, and you can't tell them apart. Even the Christian women wear "Mandi Is!" (Headdresses and veils) like the Druze.

"Who's the Sheikh, or the mukhtar?"

"Well, there's one of each, both Druzes and both named Kazaly, but the principal man of the town is an old, old, priest who looks like the Emir Bashir Chehab."

"Priest? In a Druze village?"

"Yes. Everyone likes him and he sort of looks after the town, like an old patriarch. He puts up all the distinguished visitors of both Christians and Druzes in his house and everyone goes to him for advice, municipal or otherwise. His name is Father Habib Haddad, He's over eighty, has seventeen descendants in Brazil and is thinking of migrating there next year."

Rounding a venerable oak, sanctified by a circle of stones placed around it by the Druzes, the caravan went up a ravine whose narrow trail, the main highway into the town, was deep with loose stones

and came to the Ain that gives the place its name and existence.

Ain Ata's Ain

Flowing copiously for thousands of years, as attested by remains of earlier civilizations about it, the ice-cold source of Ain Ata's life is now encased in a well- built modern structure of fine white stone and gushes forth from a large brass spigot. Women, their white "mandils" bound with pink or white bands, were filling handsome water jars painted with the red-brown and grey designs for which the Hasbaya region is famous.

An old blind Druze received water from a little village girl and all in the caravan drank greedily from the spring. It was two hours out of Kfeir.

All Mt. Lebanon villages, even the isolated, roadless ones like this one, had winding hillside streets lined with all manner of houses, old and new, rich and poor, flat topped or tiled. Here was a well-built, almost streamlined villa of a wealthy returnee from California, there the priest's old-style house with its typical Lebanese arches and pillars. Radios blared Far id al—Atrashe's new and Asmahan's old popular love songs from some houses. Water jars went in seemingly endless procession from all of them to the spring.

The "Eagle Tomb"

Up against the skyline on a high, rocky point was the gleaming white dome of the Qubba of a respected Druze sheikh of the last hundred years. It was also the town Khalwt or Druze house of worship and had a modern cement verandah built like a lookout over the Ain Harshe valley below.

"Look behind it," said Abu Issam, seeking to amuse the reporter, while he and Shehade visited furiously with the many relatives and friends.

Behind it was an isolated outcropping of rock. The east face contained a First Century B.C. Hellenistic-style tomb unlike any the reporter had yet seen. The rock had been hollowed out to form a canopy over the burial place proper. The latter had a step or resting place for the head of the deceased cut from the rock, but the unusual feature was a great eagle, with outspread wings, complete (except

for the head), although somewhat battered. This had been carved on the underside of the canopy so as to hover over the sarcophagus.

Seleucid Era Inscription

In a nearby barnyard an ornate slab of similar stone contains the following inscription in Greek: "Julious Kanthouros Eiraios built this tomb for himself in 375." The few hardy archaeologists who had previously ventured this far off the beaten road to see the remarkable "Eagle Tomb" believe the stone comes from the tomb itself and that the date is according to the Seleucid era, i.e., 64 B.C., the very year Pompey conquered this land for Rome.

But Greco-Roman tombs are no novelty in Lebanon and the Beirut newsman was anxious to get on to the Ain Harshe temple in good enough sunlight for photos.

While the donkeys luxuriated in a tree-shaded courtyard, eating and drinking their fill, the expedition proceeded for another hour on foot down a mountainside of sharp limestone outcroppings to the famous temple. . . but this episode belongs to another story.

Sunburned, tired, thirsty and with only two exposures left on the last roll of film, the Ain Harshe pilgrims limped up to Ain Ata in the late afternoon.

"You've got to save those shots for our donkey caravan," said Tony, and thus it was agreed.

On the way to the mukhtar's house, the STAR man, looking around him, was heard to exclaim:

"We didn't go out this way, this is a strange part of town."

Then he stood transfixed.

"What's the matter. Are you sick?" asked Tony.

"But that post on the corner of the balcony over there..."

"What's the matter with it? It looks OK."

"But those carvings on it. Why didn't anyone tell me about them?"

"What, those bumps and circles? What's good about them? There are no inscriptions. Nothing interesting."

It was a square post of hard white stone carved boldly on all four sides in clear bas relief.

Strange Symbols

Suns, moons, crescents, planetary symbols, hieroglyphics and unfamiliar designs were carved in profusion, each side being entirely different from the other.

"This is not Greco Roman like the tomb or the temple?"

"Ah, too bad, well, let's move on while there's still sunlight for the caravan picture."

"No, I mean this is much older. It's a rare pre-Seleucid carving, maybe Hittite or Assyrian influence. I've got to sketch it and take some photos."

"Photos, oh no you don't. How about our caravan?"

A compromise was reached to photograph the sunny side only, with half of the precious unexposed film. Word went down the line: "Don't let the reporter see any more carvings of any kind or we won't get home tonight."

At the mukhtar' s house was a tax collector, looking very bored in Ain Ata's rustic atmosphere. He was unimpressed with the discovery. "You should see Baalbek," he began.

But the mukhtar's aged relative, the respected Sheikh Rashrash Kazaly, had been listening attentively to the Beirut visitor.

Handing the latter another bunch of cold grapes, he said in halting English:

"You appreciate the old things of our village. 200 meters high up on the peak over us, behind it, facing Jebal Sheikh, are some carvings which few people have seen. One is like a queen. Another is the lower half of a great statue."

"How long to get there?"

"Oh, a third of an hour, perhaps."

Everyone rebelled. It was too late. There was Father Habib to visit and the caravan picture...

The mukhtar's wife saved the day for science by sending in another big platter of bunches of grapes. The reporter, Shehade and Sheikh Rashrash unobtrusively drifted off. The expedition's camera was hidden in the newsman's pocket.

Worship of Mt. Hermon

It was a primitive temple area mostly cut from the living rock of the limestone crest and facing east directly toward the heart of sacred Mt. Hermon, now rising in unimpeded view, without foothills, in all its rust-colored dignity and turning slightly orange in the light of the setting sun.

"The queen" was of course, a lintel or tympanum of the Roman period carved with the moon goddess flanked by two smaller figures, one holding a torch toward her. It had been seen briefly by French archaeologists during the mandate.

"But what about the statue?"

"By golly," he said, in his Iowa farm-English of 1910, "it was here a few years ago. Nobody would want to take it."

He began prowling about a great landslide of rocks which had swept away most of the temple's masonry,

"Here it is!"

The Frenchmen had come within ten yards of Ain Ata's most curious survival of antiquity (the Assyrian-type carving of the 2nd Iron Age had not been dug up then) without seeing it.

Persian Period Statue

Here was no well-carved Greco-Roman statue of the opening of our era, but the feet, legs and knees of a clumsily fashioned idol of Phoenician days, showing Achaemenid influence of the Fifth Century B.C. when Lebanon formed a part of the 5th satrapy under the regional name of Abarnahara and paid tribute to the great Darius I of Iran.

"It will be too late to take the donkey caravan picture by the time we get back to the village," rationalized the reporter to Shehade, who was unhappy to see the camera come out again.

"Quick, Sheikh Rashrash, get by the foot of the statue, open the camera as much as possible and inshallah, we might get a picture," he said.

Back at the mukhtar's, the disgraced STAR newsman was taken in hand by an inpatient "committee of safety" and convoyed to the patriarchal house virtually under guard.

"No more stones" was the expedition leader's stern admonition,

as the would-be archaeologist was rushed by a courtyard on whose center stood a block of white stone that looked surprisingly like an altar of the Greco-Roman period.

At the patriarch's

"Ya Abuna," gasped Abu Issam as he reached the top of the steps at the priest's house, "if you have any antiquities, hide them, or we'll never get back to Kfeir tonight."

Father Habib almost looked more like Emir Bashir than that long-bearded Prince of Lebanon himself. His Orthodox priest's hat was old and battered until it resembled the old-fashioned tarboosh of Emir Bashir. The long white beard, bushy eyebrows and penetrating, sparkling eyes were all there. Only his black priestly robe was different.

As the guests sipped coffee in the patriarch's sky-blue reception room, the reporter began wishing he had only sketched the Assyrian-type carvings at Ahmad Sehle's house and that the faint glow of light in the western sky, sparkling over the sea at Tyre, which is visible from Ain Ata's heights, was strong enough for a photo.

Emigrant at 80

Abuna conversed easily in English, as he had been in America as a grown man in 1910 when Sheikh Rashrash had come home to Lebanon as a youth of 19. Yes, he was determined to emigrate to Brazil next year to enjoy his last years amid his seventeen descendants on Sao Paulo. He hoped his visitors would return before then and he would be happy to pose for a picture. In the meantime, it would be barbarous to let the Kfeirian and their Beirut guest return home in the dark over the rough mountain road. They must all stay as his guest for the evening.

This was the theme song of Ain Ata as the donkey caravan slipped down the darkening streets.

"Ya Abu Issam, ya Shehade. What is this? You must all come to our house tonight. There are wolves on the trail to Kfeir."

As the moon rose over Jebal Sheikh and the donkeys pursued their sure-footed way down the millenary route to Kfeir, Ain Ata faded into the shadows, as did the image of this mountain of Emir

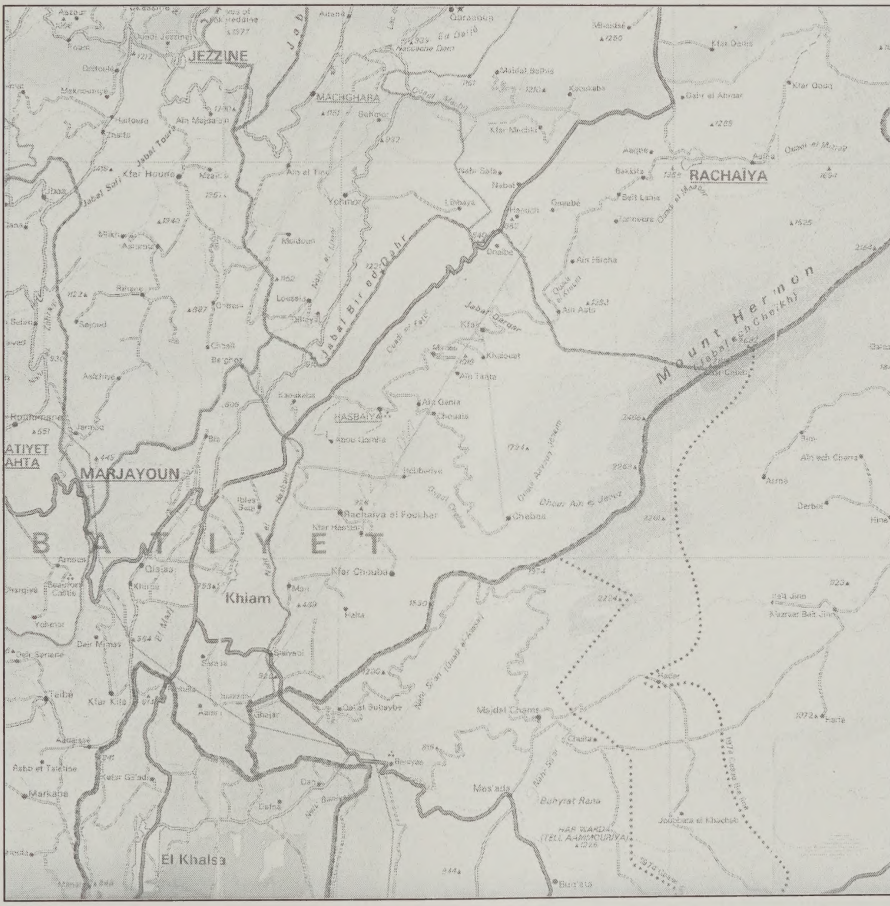
Bashir of a century ago, relived by the gentle, priestly patriarch of the village of 650 inhabitants, mostly Druze.

But Ain Ata and its "Emir Bashir" were not easily forgotten. In 1954, Fr. Habib was duly photographed during a final visit to Beirut, enroute to Brazil, and, in 1956, the writer, still musing over the strange "Hermon shrine" and its Persian-period statue, returned in broad daylight to study the site and re-photograph its curiosities.

Lebanon's Governmental Districts



Neighboring Villages of Kfeir

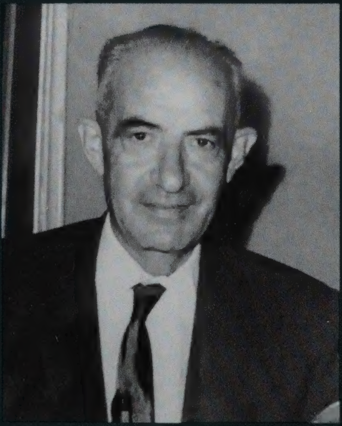


El-Kfeir, The Biggest Small Village in Lebanon

Even though war has swirled near and occasionally into El-Kfeir many times in the past, you'd think this ancient Lebanese village has remained relatively untouched by the outside world. However, a biblical aura remains and the honey-combs, the figs, plums, olives, apples, pears, almond trees and grapevines, the donkeys, sheep and goats—reinforce the impression. Glancing out of a window, one sees the snow-mantled peaks of Mount Hermon, where Jesus may have undergone his transfiguration.

What the courtly Arab is saying to you as he sips a small cup of coffee seems like a reasonable boast: "One of our citizens became the presiding officer of the United Nations and we've got a US Senator, a member of the House of Representatives and a provincial governor in Canada. Not bad for one village!" The speaker is Arreph El-Khoury, author, journalist, landowner and probably Kfeir's biggest booster.

Worried that descendants of Kfeir scattered around the world will grow up ignorant of their roots, El-Khoury has written an engrossing book subtitled "*The Cradle of Genius*" and billed as "*The Biggest Little Village in Lebanon.*" Some of El-Khoury's commentary seems to echo those heard in many societies—the passing of spontaneous dancing and singing and the ancient local sports. But he lauds the great achievements of its citizens.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arreph El-Khoury, sent to the United States in 1922 to be with his sister, decided to improve his English by enrolling and graduating from high school in Welch, West Virginia. His command of the English language led to a career as a short story writer and journalist. One of his stories was published in an anthology featuring the 100 best stories by the 100 most renowned and respected writers of the 20th century.

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